



Old ladies be cryin' for babies
That they lost to the streets, it's shady
Uncle toms want us to join the navy
So we could fight over oil like it's all gravy
But it's not good
We need to open our eyes and see past the hood
Because this is real life not a movie like Hollywood

read the rest of Fat Wayne's POW on page 6

Greetings Beat readers!!! Welcome to yet another fabulous issue of writings from the 12.20 issue sessions. Unfortunately last week we featured the 12.20 writings from San Francisco, so this week there is very little if any writings from the mothership.

Before we get this editorial note going, allow this editor to mention that we cut plenty of love pieces/poems, thug pieces, check in pieces etc. WE will state and restate again and again, The Beat will no longer publish simple pieces that look like every little effort was put forth. As for love letters, well, send that letter/poem to your love! Of course we will always publish you writers that simply try and write, but we are not interested in the two-minute piece, meaning you sit for 58 minutes and in the final minutes you deliver several sentences.

Ed note readers this fabulous issue would not be in your hands tonight if it wasn't for the one and only Sheerly Avni. Most of you Alameda heads know Sheerly and her incredible commitment to the program and you the writers/artists. For your information, Sheerly stepped up huge this week, helping edit, type and respond to most of Alameda County and a solid chunk of Santa Clara County too. Without her help this issue would be sitting on the shelf waiting for next week. Way to go Sheerly! Ready for next week?

Now before this editors welcomes our guest ed note writer this week, allow us to remind you that this week's POW (Pieces OF the Week) writers are featured on pages 4-11. The topics that were addressed prior to the writing in this issue, they are... "A Big Hit" - In life, there are always remarkable and memorable moments — some beautiful and some terrible. What we want to know in this topic is what powerful experience could make you change the way you are, or how you view things in life? It could be the loss of someone very important, or nearly losing your own life. It could be getting hurt on the streets — or hurting someone else while participating in a negative activity. It might even be a frightening nightmare. What can hit you so hard that it can make you want to say, "I'm over with this life. It's time to change."

Our second topic, "Carelessness" - As a result of careless driving, a diesel truck caught on fire and exploded on the freeway, shutting down a direct route to the Bay Bridge and affecting tens of thousands of people. The driver of the truck was speeding, and ended up causing a lot of grief to a lot of people without even knowing he was doing that. So, our question to you this week is: when has a simple act of carelessness caused tragedy in your life? Was it when you lost your house key at school? Or when you dropped something and it broke into a thousand pieces? Are there times when a simple act of carelessness could've caused a tragedy, but you got lucky somehow and it didn't? Describe the situation and how it turned out... Our third topic, "Calling Out To All Volunteers"- The Beat recently lost a lot of our funding, and we are struggling to keep The Beat program above water. So we're seriously looking for volunteers. If you could write a promotional letter to people saying why they should volunteer at The Beat, what would you say? Would you tell them how much you need help? Would you describe how important it is for the world not to turn its back on you? We need volunteers and we want you to spark their interest. How are you going to do that? Lastly, "Day Dreaming In My Room..."

All right, knowing the topics, lets get on with our special guest commentary from our new friend Andrew, who is very familiar with The Beat Within, although he never contributed to our publication until today. With that said, lets give our friend the floor, given he has a thought or two about one of our topics this week, Andrew!

What's happening Beat readers? I'd like to start by saying a couple things and kicking off what I hope will be my first of several passages for The Beat. I've had the opportunity to type out a ton of Beat Within pieces over the past week and I'm looking forward to getting out to some workshops and being able to meet a few of you writers I've become familiar with...

So what is a "big hit"? There's really no right or wrong answer for that. Like many things in life, big hits are

what we make of them. They can result from personal rock bottoms, family tragedies or simply the sudden realization for any given reason that what we're doing is hurting us and something needs to change. In essence, a big hit is a catalyst for change in our lives. We can choose to either bounce back and become better people from our big hits, or use them as an excuse to continue spiraling downward.

My big hit finally came when I was arrested after a night of carelessness and poor decisions, and one year later sentenced to the CYA for 18-36 months. I'm going to save the details of my offense for later writing and for this piece focus on how my big hit changed me.

I was seventeen years old and had no prior offenses when I was arrested, and I'd never spent a day in the hall, so my mom was going through all that much more when it came to my court dates. I've always had strong support from my mother and during my trial and sentencing she and my family were right behind me. I knew that seeing me in pain would hurt my mom more, so during court I stayed solid, and never showed emotion or sorrow. The judge said that even without a criminal record, the Youth Authority would be necessary for me because I had no remorse. That's when I learned of the bureaucracy that is the juvenile justice system.

When I was sent to the hall I used to sit in my room full of self-pity and anger. I despised the judge and probation officer who "put me away," a seventeen-year old college student who had just completed my freshman year with a 3.8 grade point average. I even entered myself in an outpatient rehab program while awaiting my court dates on home supervision and couldn't understand the fact that the system wanted to throw me into a notorious shhh hole to "rehabilitate" me when I was already on track. All I could ask myself was "why me?" Why was I being treated like such a detriment to society after one offense?

I said above that my big hit "finally came" when I was arrested and at seventeen years old couldn't contemplate making it through two years of jail. The truth is that both of those statements are false. I had several opportunities to change before I ever came into contact with the police, but being young and "invincible" caused me to ignore my smarter side's own cries for help. The night of my arrest was just the first time I'd actually been caught doing anything wrong, and though I had moved into a positive light during my year on home supervision before sentencing, I'd had several "big hits" in my life beforehand that I chose not to acknowledge.

I'll always look back in life and regret the poor decisions I made because of the way that they affected others. However, I also acknowledge the reality that there's nothing I can do to change the past, and I feel fortunate today that I was sent through the system and now have the opportunity to fully appreciate everything I have. I've learned that a big part of life is recognizing the big hits when they come, and capitalizing on them as rare moments of clarity that give us the opportunity to find out who we really are. There's no way to control when our big hits come, especially when we're affected by the consequences of our loved ones actions, but one thing that I can say with total certainty is that I'll never look back again and wish that I'd seen a big hit before it was too late, I've learned that lesson.

Well, although at the time that big hit seemed too colossal to deal with, we're selfishly kind of glad that Andrew went through that now because he has the potential to be a major player for The Beat Within. As you saw from his brief description of a 'big hit,' he has an incredible way with words and that will only flourish with his continued connection with The Beat Within. I think it's safe to say that this issue should now go out to Andrew and Sheerly. Andrew, because he's a valuable new addition to our family and Sheerly because her consistent relentlessness has helped keep us afloat, especially on a week like this. So, with that, let us shut up so you can start reading our specialty — the writings from juvenile halls in the Bay Area and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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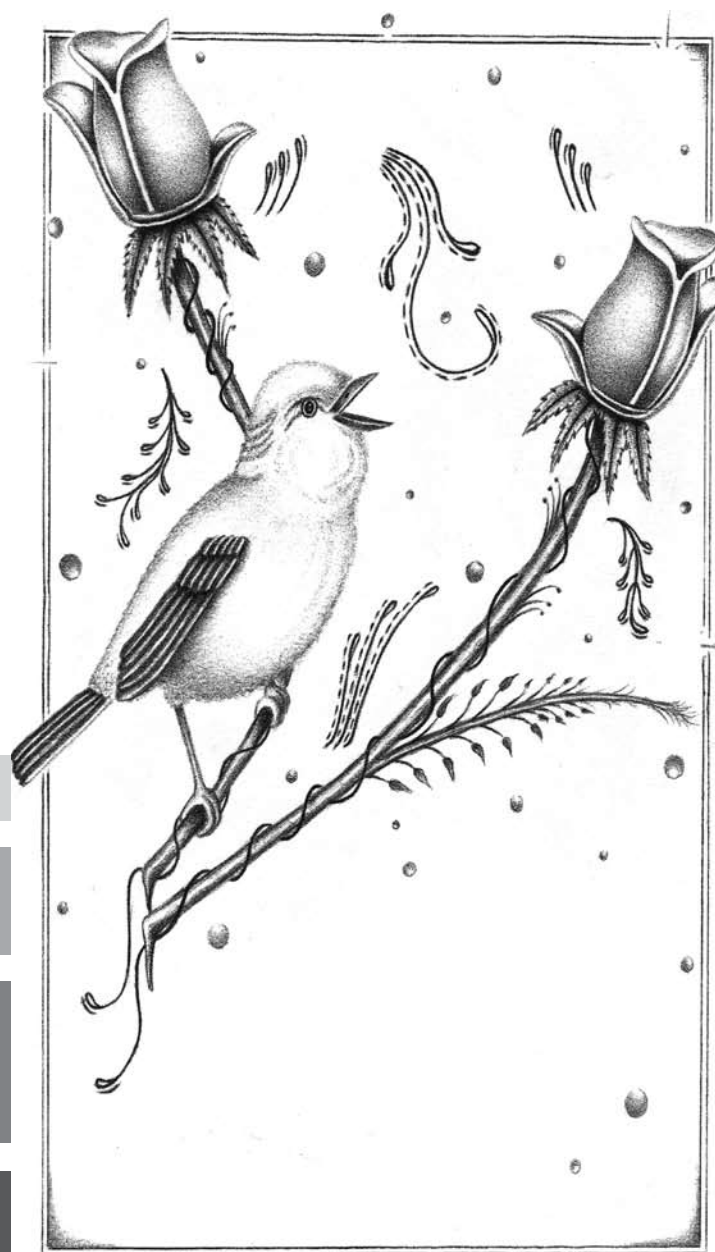
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www.thebeatwithin.org

EDITOR'S NOTE	2
PIECES OF THE WEEK	4
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	10
STANDOUTS	16
SAN MATEO COUNTY	31
THE BEAT WITHOUT	34



A Big Hit A Year Ago

About a year ago, after smoking weed a few years, I started to get into other drugs. First trying ecstasy, and shrooms. It was so fun I just started doing them more and more often.

After a while, (within a few months) nothing in my life felt as fun as it used to be, when I was sober. All I wanted to do was get high or drunk, anything but being sober. I got stuck in a downward spiral; I dropped out of school got kicked out of my parents house, started getting arrested for doing stupid things. And everywhere I went I got kicked out (because no one wants a druggie living in their house.) till eventually I was on the streets. I still had friends but they were all just as involved in drugs if not more than I was.

After being in such a miserable condition I started doing heavier and heavier drugs, acid, tweak, and mixing drugs. But then I got arrested again for doing such stupid things, and got taken to Juvie. And while in here, I realized I don't need drugs to be happy. Before I started doing drugs, my life wasn't that bad, in fact my life was actually pretty good. And I took it all for granted. And like they say you don't know what you've got 'till it's gone. And when I get out I am going to change my life back to the way it was, before drugs.

-Tyler, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so proud of you for writing this piece and for the courageous decisions you are making in your life. One of the many things that are so frustrating about the system is that there isn't a lot of support for people who are trying to kick an addiction. You deserve help and a program on the outs to help you stay away from "feel good" (yet dangerous) drugs as a way to cope with difficult feelings and situations. Is there someone you can ask for help in finding the right program for you? Like a parent, another family member, or a neighbor? You can also check out Alateen <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/> which mostly focuses on drinking, but will help you find the best program for you. Remember, you are not alone, and you deserve help with this life change.

This Hard Living

I'm looking for change
And it's hard 'cause the streets keep calling my name
I'm tryin' to stay away and maintain
But everything always ends up the same
I find myself on the block with a thang
Ready to bang
Letting my belt hang to the flo
On my way to the liquor store
It's messed up but it's the only life I know
Coming out this hood
Living a life so cold
And I'm growing old from wisdom of the street
But it won't allow myself to meet defeat
I can't be beat at an early age
My mind filled wit' rage
In the lords name I pray
To get this thought out my brain
At times I feel I'm going insane
It's a shame
I use to look at life a different way
Until I found out the streets isn't a place to stay
All the homies off hella yay
Better watch out when the katers spray
Every night I pray
To get through another day
But hey
That's how we live in the bay.

-Tee, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really brave and well-written poem. You allow yourself to contemplate fears and big questions about your life. You are seeking a new path, and praying for the strength to find it. We are hoping that you will have the chance to make a new start, soon. What are some things you think you can do on the outs to make a break with the past? Like you said, it's the only life you have known. Is there someone you can talk to who has gotten out of the game and can give you some advice? Maybe like a brother or cousin or friend?

The Big One

I'm over this life
It's really time to change,
It feels like my life has been rearranged
From the bottom to the top
It's time that I change and make it a stop.
I'm tired of this situation that I put myself through
Everything I say is true
It's time that I turn my page, so I can feel brand new
Make yo' next move yo' best move
As I made that choice, that's what I chose
I tried to win but I lose
As I sit and make a choice
It's the big one
It's something big and it's a ton.
I just wanna be that number one
Person that makes the best decision in life
So I can be to the top
So people can come and ask
How did you make "The big one"
I said -- it's either jail or freedom.

-Tabatha, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem is classic - the way you say over and over that the decision is the big one, and then wait till the end to drop your knowledge, after we've been holding our breath for so long, waiting to find out the secret. Unlike a lot of Beat writers, you seem to feel like it's YOUR choice, like you can decide whether or not to take a path towards jail, or a path towards liberty. That's a powerful way of looking at the word. YOU choose, you make the big decision. So tell us, have you made that decision yourself? And what will following through on that decision look like?

It's time that I turn my page, so I can feel brand new
Make yo' next move yo' best move
As I made that choice, that's what I chose

On My Cell Bed

As I sit on my bed
Thoughts piercing through my head
My body feels weak
My heart feels dread

I think of the times
When I used to do good
I'd do stuff straight up
Without asking if I should

Impulsive thinking
Gets the best of me
Acting on emotions
Nothin' but a pity

Alarms sound
As I run up and won
Nowhere to be seen
Nowhere to be found

It's a couple days later
My minds in a haze
Thinking what could be
If I just would've stayed

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: Excellent piece! Now next time you're in a situation like this and you start to experience all of these racing thoughts and emotions be sure to think back to the last time you felt this way and what happened. In other words, take it all as a warning sign for possible danger of making a mistake.

Breaking Point

Man, I'm at the point where I'm completely sick of being in this damn system. I really don't want to go through this anymore, for real. I've been coming here a lot and I've realized that I'm wasting some of the best years of my life.

I miss my female so much, it's tearing me up inside. When I go to this group home in LA, I'm gonna do my best so I can get back with my girl and my family. No matter what happens, I'm gonna succeed this time. I'm ready to turn my whole life around and nothing is gonna get in May. When I get out, I'm gonna stay out. That way I don't have to leave my girl and my daughter anymore. It's time to change.

-Jake, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It sounds like you've hit a moment of real clarity, when the path that is right for you shows bright and strong and there's no mistaking it. Congratulations on getting there - some people go through their whole lives without ever really taking that good look at themselves and thinking about what they really want. Your first step has been taken... and now the next one is to figure out the details of how to get yourself on this path and stay on it. What do you need to do? What could get in the way? And mostly, whom can you reach to for help and support?

A Big Hit: My Grandma

A big hit in my life would be my grandma dying.

I love her so much, I would do anything for her.

I may have not done everything she asked or been there when she needs me, like now, but God knows my heart. My grandma is my life. She took me from the hospital when I was born, and her and my grandpa took care of me my whole life. My parents are d-boys and d-girls. My moms is from Frisco my pops is from San Jose.

But yeah back on the topic. If my grandma was to die I'd want to change my life for the better and dedicate my life to her, because this is not the way I was raised. She raised me to be a respectable young black man, not a statistic of the system like many other of my black people.

My grandma means the world to me even though I don't show it all the time. I was raised with four other siblings. They're from Frisco though, but they lived out here when I was born and I'm the youngest. I'm also a crack baby because my moms did drugs when she was having me and my pops was supplying her.

My dad went to the Pen before I was born, and then got out when I was two. He was in and out my whole life, and my mom was also in and out. That's why I could never live with them. My dad just got out and my mom is in the pen now she should be getting out by the time I do or shortly after.

Well what I'm trying to say is I've had a rough life I gang bang, sell dope, been in and out of Juvy my whole life since I was a very young teen. Now I'm bout to be eighteen. I've been here twelve times and ain't learned shhh and I think my grandma's death would be a real wake up call but other than that I hope she lives forever.

I love my Grammy.

-Robert, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You really dug down into the truth of yourself for this piece And you know, regardless of what you've done in the past, it was written by the part of you that your grandmother would be most proud of: Honest, thoughtful, and loving... You clearly have it in you to be what she hoped for: A respectable young man. But like you say, you've been through a lot, and your habits are terrible, and your parents only set an example of what NOT to do. Sounds like you need a new role model, closer to your parents' age. So what about it? What about school, sports, programs? Are you ready to go out and seek positive people to guide you out of this life that hurts you so much?

In My Mind

Sometimes I lay in my bed and think about killings, drugs, etc..

How long will it last until there are no more people to kill and no more drugs to sell? Then will there ever be world peace, or will the next generation continue it? A lot of innocent children have been killed in the streets who have done nothing wrong.

That's why I write these words of sorrow and sadness. If this doesn't end, it will be madness. I know why we live this way, the life of crime it only adds a piece to this violence.

If I wasn't incarcerated, I'd be smiling, enjoyin' all the days to come and go with my girl and family. But all this is for a reason I guess. Gangs are really the root of it all -- sometimes big, sometimes small, we all add a piece of this violence.

I don't know why, we just do what we do.

-Lonnie, Alameda

From The Beat: You ask some of the most important questions we have... why is it that the worst victims of the violence, poor communities in the streets, are also the same ones committing the violent acts? We agree that gangs are a terrible problem, which is why we challenge our young writers to rethink their affiliations, but what makes gangs seem like a good choice? Why are the streets so dangerous, why are schools so messed up, why are jobs so scarce, that joining a gang even seems like a choice someone would want to make? We are waiting for your thoughts on these questions.

The Heart of The Game

At one time, my whole life revolved around basketball. Then an incident during my tenth grade basketball season changed all of that. This incident made me realize that I should focus more of my attention around God, family and friends, my tenth grade basketball team was playing in the tenth grade tournament.

We had won our first three games in a very impressive way. That put us in a three game championship series against St. Lucky's Charms. We went in the first game, when my best friend Nay Nay scored 25 points, and I scored 27 points. We won the game by a large margin.

Immediately following the game, Nay Nay complained about chest pains. She still had the complaint the next day at school and was thinking about not playing that night. I told her it was probably nothing but indigestion or heart burn. I finally convinced her to play.

I was more worried about the game than I was about Nay Nay. It was a tight game and Nay Nay was playing well, but then in the third quarter, Nay Nay collapsed after setting a pick for our point guard. The team trainers on the sidelines rushed to her aid. They got her off the court and into an ambulance. For the rest of the game, I couldn't focus and we lost.

The next day I was hoping to see Nay Nay at school, but she didn't show up. I felt bad because I had persuaded her to play. Our team went into the last game thinking about Nay Nay. That last thing on our minds was winning the championship. At halftime we were down by 23 points and my teammates were hanging their heads.

When we came out the locker room, we saw Nay Nay sitting on the bench. She said she was suffering from a mild heart murmur. I was ecstatic to see her there. Luckily I hit a game winning three pointers with no time left on the clock. I immediately grabbed the game ball and gave it to Nay Nay.

Then I apologized for making her play the night before. My best friend said that's ok. Now I know my best friend was too ill to play in a game that, in the big picture meant very little. Ever since this incident, I have changed my priorities. I continue to play basketball, but no longer let it run my life.

-New New, Alameda

From The Beat: Here's a confession from The Beat to you. When we read the line "I gave the game all to Nay Nay" tears sprung to our eyes. This is a powerful and moving story, and we are so glad you learned this valuable lesson before either you or Nay Nay got hurt. Thanks for staying true to the game - the game of life.

Strugglin' With Change

Chillin' in my cell
 Straight going through hell
 Shed so many tears
 For these past years
 Tryin' be something in life
 But always end up in a fight
 People think I'm a fool
 But gangstas need love too
 There's just one life to live
 But there's just no love to give
 And not because I want it back
 But how can I love when my hearts under attack
 When a man loves a woman it's all an act
 So I don't even play that
 I'm a gangsta just tryin' to live my life
 But something's just never right
 So I do what I want to do
 'Cause in the end no one really cares but you
 I'm sorry Mom I'm sorry Dad but this is how I lead
 I'm a winner in my mind I still got B's and G's
 I sit here and laugh but when I'm alone I cry
 'Cause I'm just a gangsta born to die
 I know I destroyed your love that's no lie
 Every night I pray to God and He always tries
 My mind is twisted 'cause I want to change
 But how come it's always change
 I hope I change.

-Playgirl, Santa Clara

From The Beat: WE hope this is your time to change, before it's too late. Yet, it may not be the time for you to change. We read the pain in your piece. We sense the regret you have put your loved ones through. How did it get to this point for you? What must you do to live a life you are comfortable with? You can't be happy with the life this gangsta life has brought you, so tell us in writing what you wish or shall we say will do to better your life!! We are listening!

We Need to Open Our Eyes

I come from the slums
 Where crack comes in by tons
 Youngstas infatuated wit' guns
 Single mothers with sons
 Young females bein' run
 Killin' our own people for funds
 This genocide shhh is burnin' my lungs
 The system is slavery, worse than getting hung
 Trialin' as adults, they gettin' us while we young
 I'm tellin' you it's hard times
 Want you to think the only way you could make it
 Is ballin' or spittin' up rhymes
 want us all incarcerated
 Because our dark skin is passionately hated
 Old ladies be cryin' for babies
 That they lost to the streets, it's shady
 Uncle toms want us to join the navy
 So we could fight over oil like it's all gravy
 But it's not good
 We need to open our eyes and see past the hood
 Because this is real life not a movie like Hollywood
 And our beautiful black women
 we need to stop treatin' them like dirty linen
 Because the kids is picking up the message that we're sendin'

-Fat Wayne, Alameda

From The Beat: In the words of yet another of your thoughtful poems, bristling with rage and revolutionary spirit, you may have found your own calling. While your body is in prison, your mind and thoughts can roam free, in the form of messages you send out to the world. And we choose the word "message" because as you say, kids pick up on what they hear. You have it in you to be that great teacher who gives them something besides what the b.s. they hear (the b.s. YOU heard when you were younger.) The kids need to open their eyes, you have begun to open yours. The more you write and the more you are read, the more you will help others see.

My Change From A Boy To A Man, A Man To A Father . . .

Reflection of my childhood thoughts
 Doing crimes and never getting caught
 Running around a drugged up projects as a baby
 Mother never did drugs but the next door lady did
 Gun shots flying through the windows, so we slept on the floors
 Never seen the police coming knocking on project doors
 Moma didn't have that much money to pay the rent
 I got on my grind so my family didn't have to sleep in a tent
 Stop[ed] going to school and started robbing people, and selling drugs
 Got a little money so I thought I was a thug
 Wanting all the respect on the block so I got me a lady
 Been together for about four years, now she's having my baby
 I used to think about myself, now I have a son to take care
 Stop coming to jail so my family won't have to drop tears
 I got nine years now for attempted murder and my days movin' slow

My time is gonna be painful like a blow
 Crying every night on my pillow to hear my baby
 momma voice

I'm gonna make a change, that's my choice
 I wanna kiss and hug my little homie every day
 To let him know daddy ain't going nowhere I'm here
 to stay
 This voice reaching out to his mother from me

Soon we'll be married baby...

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: You deliver an incredible piece for us readers. You did something horrendous, but yet you have our hearts and we hope you are truthful when you speak of seeing a better way for your girl and your baby boy, who will truly enrage you when he gets that chance. Write your baby daily. Bombard him with love through letters and one day you will embrace him in the free world with love. Until then, love him and your girl with every chance that comes your way, and for you that is through your touching piece!

I sit here and laugh but when I'm alone I cry

'Cause I'm just a gangsta born to die

I know I destroyed your love that's no lie
 Every night I pray to God and He always tries

Drugs and My Dad: The Big Hit

Hey, what's cracking Beat? Today I am going to write on the topic "A Big Hit". Well something that has made me realize that I wanna end a phase in my life was my dad and seeing how drugs have took a hold of his life at first.

It started for him by selling the stuff. Then he escalated and started trafficking. Soon after he got busted, and it took seven years of his life away from his family. Then when he finally got back to us, he did well for a while 'till he got off parole. He was on the come up the legit way, and started doing big things, getting a few houses and a few cars and a whole lot of tools because he does mechanics.

It wasn't long after drugs came back into his life. He wasted all his money on drugs, sold his cars and tools and lost his house. Then when he hit rock bottom, he realized what he was doing, so he stopped doing drugs and was on the come up again. He got all his stuff back, then drugs did it to him again.

Now this is where he is at on the come up. He just got a house and a new car, but he is struggling this time because of his age. He is doing it so that made me realize that drugs are all bad and I need to just stay away from them, because one way or another they gonna mess up your life.

-Droopy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, what a powerful and sad story. Watching your dad go through so much up and down and pain must have put you through a lot too. Do you feel like you've learned from his lessons? Have you stayed away from drugs so far? Does your dad help you stay away from them? Even with everything he's been through, we can tell from this piece that he truly loves you.

the judicial system holds the reign
it's bigger than you think

Day Dreaming

The walls are closing in on me (and I can't breath)
My crazy mind got me wondering
Will I ever be free?
Days turn to weeks
Weeks turn to months
And months turn to years
With no laughter but tears!
What is my biggest fear?
Not being able to see the future clear.
Will I live to see another day
Or in a close casket will I lay
And if I do pass away
How will people remember my name?
Will I just be another face
On a tombstone which has engraved
Don't cry for me for I am in a better place?
Or will I be known as a G who stay solid like a stone.
Whose only contact with the world is on a collect pay phone
Is it true what you reap is what you sow
Because if so I'm bound to be alone
From a youngsta who came from a broken home
I'd say my life and everything in it is cold!
To the generations of G's who stay solid on there feet

-Lil' L, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Yes indeed you are looking at the life you are leading and obviously you are reflecting how this life may unfold. How do you want it to unfold? How do you want to live from this point forward? Are you looking to change? What is your game plan upon leaving the hall?

Eye Opener

Damn it's hard facing a life sentence
On my knees every night, asking God for repentance
I wonder why we do things that are bad for our health
Thinking that if we take the risk it will bring us immediate wealth
Life I love and I appreciate it
But sometimes its hard not to hate it
Because there's a lot of things in this world that has my eyes shaded
The streets have hardened me and my emotions are jaded
Because this whole world is like an enormous food chain
the judicial system holds the reign
it's bigger than you think
because the knowledge that I bestow upon you
can bring you to a suicidal brink
I'm speakin' that real
so soak it up and swallow it like a healthy meal
the system is another version of slavery
Don't mistake stupidity for bravery
I know it's hard out there on the black top
Heart doin' jumping jacks every time you see a cop
Puttin' your life on the line for a ten dollar flop
When does this insignificant shhh stop?
Oh, I know. When your casket drops.

-Fat Wayne, Alameda

From The Beat: Like Nas says "this came from the gut, from the blood, from the soul." You have seen, done and faced a cruel knowledge most of us never have to deal with. And yes, we know the time you're facing must seem like an abyss - so dark it hurts to look at - but you have your words, your insights, your ability to always always answer the darkness with a rhyme. No matter where your body is, your words can't be locked away, and you will always be a teacher, inside or out.

RIP is Yo' Name

In the streets you bang turfs and puttin' work,
but what about when a loved one gets merked?
Well every day a new face gets put on a shirt, it all depends
on who shoots first, What it means is some got aim and if
you're one of them for another man's life, You might be the blame
Nobody thinks of it this way, we follow the rules of the game
Black on black crime is most of the shame
To kill another brother is how young men get their fame
The way our generation lives there will not be a change
To survive this life you have to chose a gang
To survive the phase you gotta bang that thang
When you hit the streets, RIP is yo' name.

-Steven, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem of yours gave us chill. You do such a good job showing the deadly paradox of street living: To survive, you have to be on a trail of death. It doesn't make sense, does it. So the question is, how do you grow up in a dangerous neighborhood, but stay out of the gunfire and the drama. We know it's possible, because we've seen people do it, we'd love to see you try to write a poem about it. You carry the light, show us the way.



PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Life I Choose

Chorus: 2x

we still struggle wit' sin, and fight the battle within, no
 longer running in place, so evil give me my space.

Verse 1:

posted up like a stop sign
 flyin on my grind
 living doing time/
 beat you so bad you go blind
 pickin' up a dime
 never acting a fool
 always keeping my coo'
 and lacing my game up wit' truth
 i'm as a bird
 concentrate on the word
 eye for an eye is exactly what i heard
 lounging in the cell
 reminiscing on the days we gon' leave this hell
 covered by a shell
 but still carry the weight of the world, its hurting
 but i still walk wit' god for certain
 while the evils a lurkin'
 but my spirit's still workin'
 i wear my sword like a girdle
 covered by my shell that make me feel like a turtle
 everyday wake up to lock up
 get roughed up and stoked up
 'till that time
 waiting for my time/
 to go home and sit by god's throne/
 his power is unknown
 things happen to me and i ask myself is it just a
 coincidence
 or was it a bad incident
 i say to myself nobody's innocent
 i thrive to become tranquil
 you feel
 too good instead packin' the steal
 while the enemies always in search to kill
 the stuff that i know is relevant
 blow a hole so big it look like an elephant
 so the knowledge i got i'm selling it
 it's gonna get world wide so inherit it
 you'll be rich living lavage
 not trippin off cabbage
 where nobody's a savage
 but you got an obligation
 'cause the stations you facing
 will take over the nations
 but times ticking so you racing
 you going through battles and wars
 slicing demons wit' swords
 in the name of the lord
 and never hesitate
 ready to eliminate/
 and easy to indicate
 the loss
 and the many souls that were lost

but they pay the cost
 to reject the boss
 for it was he who died on the cross

Chorus: 2x

we still struggle with sin, and fight the battle within, no
 longer running in place, so evil give me my space.

Verse 2:

been in and out through good times and bad times
 people don't understand that i'm mostly in my mind
 through the valley of death has got me learning my lesson
 got the bible in my hands stay blessed with protection
 the lord's my shepherd and the bibles my sword
 i'm that little christian piglet and i'm spreading the word
 satan lost his wings so he surely fell
 now he's trying to pull us down into the depths of hell
 see god restores our soul/
 passing through heavens gate is my goal
 so 187 with that demon trying to kill
 stab him with my cross and i'm making blood spill
 i opened up my eyes and finally realized
 how many lost souls are losing they're lives
 so now i'm banging my religion
 the crucifix is my weapon
 and my faith is my shield
 the holy spirit is real
 now let me tell you a tale
 this man is destined to hell
 he's in a one man cell
 because he talks to himself
 he hears voices he screams
 he sees the devil in dreams
 he cuts himself with his nails
 he gives other men chills
 so then they strap him down
 they lay his back on the ground
 they put the cross on his chest
 and say "lord let him be blessed" '
 and cast all the demons away
 for satan's only foul play
 a flash and a demon breaks loose
 now he sips holy water like juice
 so all you need is to pray
 and you can be saved
 see mores moved waves
 back in the days
 i know you could too
 and that is the truth
 you got nothing to lose
 this is the life that i choose

Chorus: 2x

we still struggle with sin, and fight the battle within, no
 longer running in place, so evil give me my space.

-Dirty U and Piglit, Santa Clara

From The Beat: IT has been a long time coming since we had an epic poem/ song delivered to The Beat that speaks plenty of wisdom. We appreciate your efforts and hope that others see your art and then feel compelled to drop their own science on us! Now, tell us what inspired this piece about the life you lead? When did you find God? How important is religion to you? Tell us more !

been in and out through good times and bad times
 people don't understand that i'm mostly in my mind
 through the valley of death has got me learning my lesson
 got the bible in my hands stay blessed with protection

Touching My Heart and Soul

Part 1

As I lay down in which my life goes down the sink,
My life is a mystery that's missing a lot of links
Find myself stealing looks like life isn't gone last
Now I'm visiting my mother through a bulletproof glass
Mind playing tricks on me I'm flipping out for nothing
I'm a young great writer, wish it could been something
Crying every night losing half of my lovely brain
If you have a son, and got nine years you would do the same
Breaking down from the stress that's high
Every night I pray and ask God why?
My life seems as I'm dead, just walking through pain
I wish it would stop but I keep on remains
For along time I had faith, faith in my life
I got time but feel dead, that's the price
Hurt everybody that had trust in me
And I'm the guy that my little brothers wanna be!!!
It hurt me 'cause they want to follow my light
And my little light isn't bright
I love my family to death and it will never change
All the madness I'm going through I'm the one to blame
End of part#1, part#2 coming soon...

Part 2

I had a choice to do right when I was home
Money was good, kept me away from my family and gone
Know I know what it meant to do right
Never slip, keep your game tight
If I had a choice five million or Change
I'll take the change cause the money comes and goes
This can be my chance to do right, you never know
Doors and walls closing down on me now
Stuck in a dark room with no kind of sound
This poem is the life of a young king fallen apart
And my loving heart is turning cold in the dark
I need help to show me the right way to live
So I can take love and also give
Somebody bless my soul so it can shine
Cause the path I'm walking got me blind
Pray with me so I can wash away my sin
R.I.P to my brother Weezy and my patna Bin
End of part#2.... Part#3 coming soon...

Part 3

Looking out my max cell window crying for my son
Head hurting as if I got hit with a gun
But as I'm walking back to my bed a voice touch my soul
deeper, and now I got this fear
Didn't know who it was taking over the past years
Grabbed me by my neck and said do right or else you dead
That same voice talked to me while I was in bed
I'm scared and want somebody to stop my tears
All along it was me talking to myself these past years
I'm getting letters from my girl telling me she never going to
leave
Is it true or should I not believe?
Sadness and anger shadow me down
It's all anger that I reached down and found
I just need to see my family once more
Before I close down page#3 doors
Part 4 will be around soon bye...

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: This unfinished poem is like you're unfinished life. It's full of anger and wisdom, hope and pain, mistakes and regret... But the key here is UNFINISHED. We know what nine years sounds like, it sounds like forever. But you will still be a young man when you get out, and while you are locked up, you will continue writing, continue reading, continue working on the inside of yourself. Write letters to your young son, write a children's book for his mother to read to him so he knows how much his daddy cares. Write your memoirs, write letters to your favorite authors, write to The Beat. Write, write, write. Because as long as you have the magic of your own creativity, no one can ever keep your soul locked up.

My Biggest Fear

I'm sitting in the courtroom
Not knowing what to think
I look at the judge straight into his eyes
And promise not to blink
I look back and see my mom flooded in tears
'Cause the judge is trying to wash me
And give me six years
My biggest fear is coming true
My mind is spinning I don't know what to do
So I just sit there holding back the tears
Showing the judge I have no fears
But deep down inside, I know this is it
So much of my life thrown away
Makes me want to quit
But I never been a quitter
So I promise myself to just do the time
Even though I didn't do the crime
And when I get out I'll have a successful career
Even though life is short and death is near
I wake up in tears
THANK YOU GOD
It's just another nightmare

-Juan, Alameda

From The Beat: You set us up like a master, in this one. We were right there with you on the stand, expecting the worst and waking up with relief at the end. What are some of the other nightmares that you've had and woken up to with tears of thanks? What do you think dreams mean? Some people say they predict the future Others say that our dreams are a way of dealing with our heavy emotions. Some poets think that dreams are where the poems come from. What's your take?

This poem is the life of a young king fallen apart
And my loving heart is turning cold in the dark

The Run In

Well the running started in the summer of 2002. I was on my way to my patna's house to chill with him and some fine ass bee-sees. I took a short cut through some apartment complex when I heard same voices around the corner. Knowing me, I'm hella noisy, so I stood behind the wall to listen on they conversation.

My heart skipped a beat when I heard what they were talking about shootin' up my homie's crib. I ran to his house to let him know what's up.

My homie was like, "forget that shhh, I'm gonna hit them first." So he rode his Honda Civic through their turf. They were only five blocks away from his house, so it was an easy target. Him and some of his partnas sprayed up their spot, and in the process my homie got hit in the shoulder, and in the rib cage.

I visited him at the hospital everyday until he got better. He was doing fine and he even forgot about revenge until my stupid butt reminded him.

Once again he hit that fool up, but only this time he got killed. Ya' probably remember him from my last story I wrote The Beat. It's my fault he is not here with us now.

RIP, I regret reminding him, and everyday before I go to sleep, I think 'bout my partna and and my other loved ones. That's how I got some one hurt.

-Young Trey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You tried to help him when warning him about what they were trying to do to him, but it was his decision to handle it the way he did. Sooner or later, he would have remembered it and would have thought about doing something. He chose the wrong way again. What did you learn from this experience? After this experience, what can you tell about revenge? Does it work? Is it useful?

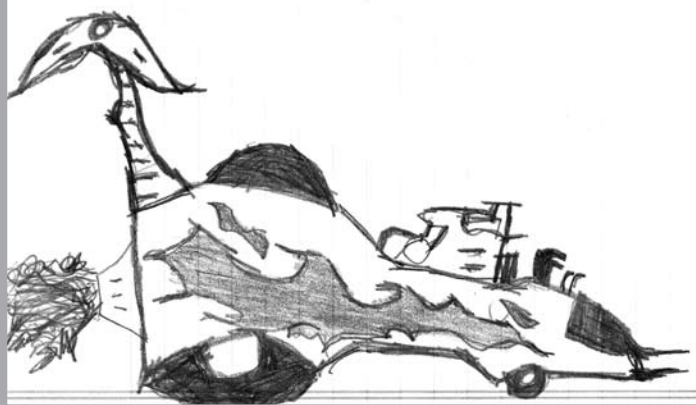
Day Dreaming In My Room

Day dreaming in my room
Start thinking about all the wonderful times
I used to have in the outs
Thinking about my mom and my dad
My mom cries every time
My dad die
He passed away in a bus accident
I hope he like the song I write about him
My mom now worried about me
My probation officers say
"You want to get out
Better stay home
And not doing something
Bad for a living"

Reminiscing
Reminiscing mi apa
Thinking about all the good times
Mi dad used to have
He died when I was six years old
Thinking about why you have to go
Saying perdon for the time
Reminiscing for him
Perdon, apa
I miss my dad all the times

-Luis , Marin

From The Beat: We're sorry for your daddy. What are your beautiful memories you have with him? Do you feel like writing about him for The Beat? Are you trying to step up now, and become the man of the family? Menaing take responsibility for your choices!? Obviously, it must be very difficult for you right now. How can you help your mom out? The song you wrote for your dad is so lovely and sad, Luis.



Day Dreaming About My Dad

When I'm in my room I be thinking about the people that I love like my Jefito. He is Superman to me no matter he be getting old, he is everything. He doesn't see that because I don't show it. He is an alcoholic, but I still love him.

I've been a bad son. I spend all my time with the homies, the girls and do drugs. I don't come home sometimes but I am tired of all that.

When I get out the first thing I'm going to do is kiss my dad and mom let them know how much I love them and to try to see my baby, Damian. He is only 10 months old. I love him with all my corazon (heart) and his mom do good in my life.

-Angel, Alameda

From The Beat: Now this is how it's suppose to be while being a son. We're willing to bet that as long as you keep close to your parents, and follow their wisdom you will more than likely be well off in the future. Now is perfect the time for you to make a good and everlasting impression on your parents before there is no more time to do so. By being in jail you are only wasting time, don't you think? Get your life back on track for your family, especially your baby boy!

A Story About My Life

I start off when I was a kid running around my apartment.
Living life as a wild child hearing gunshots every night.
I start beating up kids in my hood just for fun,
I remember when I was about 6 years old,
I would watch out the window when I saw a dope deal go sour.

It was my patna chasing down a black trunk with a .45
Even though I was young, I knew people that was in their teens.

At about eight year old, one of my close patna's die in a fire.
The fire fighters tried to save him, but he was to scared to jump out the window.

Now I'm a teen, now I start smoking to make my stress go away.

When you in the street you got to making a living
so I started robbing people, selling drugs, too.

But I love the feeling getting high or drunk
because it's the best time to go talk to a female
or even go to a party and start giggin' on the dance floor.
I recall one time when I was drunk, thinking about getting a stolo.

I took the car, was profiling down the block in a Camry.
I was scraping going about 90 MPH down the street.
But knew this life was going to a end, getting locked up for robbing someday.

Getting locked up ain't cool, you start to stress.

It's like you slave in a here,
it's all good, I gone do my time and keep my head up.

-Lil' Uso, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you so much for sharing your life story with Beat readers. A lot of people will probably read this and see a lot of similarities with their life story. But you will continue to live your own unique life story... and what will the next chapter be? You have seen a lot in your young years. Hopefully you can make a new start soon and avoid coming back to the stresses of being locked up.

Why I Can't Quit

My life is supposed to be changed already but I'm not changing anything because I'm still doing bad and I'm still involved with the gang life. Every time I ask myself, why am I never changing when I'm trying to?

So I tried telling myself that I got lots of talent and skills, and that I'm so friendly so much. I'm not that mean but I'm mean n the inside I'm friendly. I don't know how to resist my life, to start it all over so I wouldn't have joined the gang in the first place. But I wanted to change my life and get my freedom back. I'm not gonna quit on the gang, 'cause they need me. They feel like I'm their leader. Something like that, but I'm not the leader of my gang.

But once I quit they will come look for me and kill me. I'll never quit them, I'm with them for life until the day I die. That' s what is the big hit that hit me. But I liked being a part of them because they gave me a lot of credit s and taught me how to survive on the streets. I've been down for them since I was twelve years old. I have to pick: quit gang and get killed or not quit, I still survive, that is the way of gang culture. I might find a way to escape them, or not escape from them, one day I will escape somehow.

-Dizzy, Alameda

From The Beat: There were so many different questions that this piece brings up... first of all, when you describe yourself as mean on the outs and nice inside, the question to ask yourself is, which part of you is the real you? Your gang life sounds terrible (and understand this, we're NOT condemning the individual people who were in the gang with you. If we thought all gang-members were terrible we wouldn't be here at all. But look at what you'd say - if you left you'd be killed, when you're with them you do terrible things? So you made a decision when you were 12 - out of a lot of different reasons, you though this lifestyle could provide you with what you needed. Now you're older, and much much wiser, and you've seen all the horror that comes with the lifestyle. Do you really want the man you will become to pay the price for a decision you made when you didn't have enough information? No the side of you we see - creative, friendly talented, thoughtful, and, finally, GOOD, is the side that you must foster and grow. That's how you will find the success you so richly deserve.

Don't Touch It

I know you want to find
My firm tight round behind
That you seem to think is so fine
But don't touch it.

I know you ache to share
My robust full derriere
That proudly sticks up in the air
but don't touch it.

You may just be mistaken
Thinkin' it's out there, it's for the takin'
But that's not your decision to be making
So don't touch it.

Didn't you listen? Didn't you hear
When Granny used to box you 'cross your ear and say
"That don't belong to you dear,
Don't touch it!"

Why then, now that you're grown
Would you treat this as your own
And ignore my protests and my groans
...to touch it?

Whether it's a leg, a butt, or a bust you crave
Take a picture if you must
But learn to control your carnal lust
And please don't touch it.

-Keeyana, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an extraordinary poem, full of righteous indignation and self-respect. It's a good reminder to all young men about how to treat a young woman the right way. Too often, men look at women as if they're just there for the taking, for the pleasure, and for using for fun and money... And girls and women still confuse the attention they get for how they dress and walk for love. Have you noticed different behavior from men depending on how you act, what you're wearing. Is there anything women (and this FTB is being written by a woman) can do to continue to project an image of self respect? Is it how we dress? What we say? What we do?

The Bigger Picture

Man, it seems like life is getting harder and harder everyday and I'm getting older and older, but I haven't changed. They say you start to change as you get older and in some cases you do, but it's hard when you're living a material life I know we all like the clothes, shoes, jewelry, money, and cars...we love it.

We watch music videos or rap stars shining on TV with their diamonds and their gold and stuff and we go out and try to make our own image, but the problem is we move too fast. I mean we want to be millionaires overnight and we know that fast money is going to get us what we need. So then here comes the life of crime, the stuff that make our mothers cry, the reason why people die. And we don't realize what we do until they get us in a small room. You can't help the stress, it's natural, you can't get comfortable in jail and we promise that we will change but when we get out we remain the same.

-Sunny D, Alameda

From The Beat: You drop some wisdom here that we don't see often enough from youngsters. Chris Rock recently said in an interview that he doesn't let his kids listen to some rap... not because of the language, but because of the materialism in the lyrics! So yeah, when we all try to keep up with what we see on TV, and get consumed by a desire for wealth and things, we end up stealing, doing other crimes, or getting into huge trouble with credit cards or payday loans. This affects everybody, of all races. Hey, you know what else? You may not feel yourself changing, but we see you changing in the workshops and in your writing. You are becoming an intelligent, opinionated, young adult with a good sense of humor and some great insights about what's going on in the world.

Snap Back to Reality

I just wanted to say to everybody y'all ain't got to wait for that "Big Hit."

Go to church!

Don't wait for somebody to die or get locked up to realize that you ain't livin' like you want to.

That's stupid.

Wake up 'cause we ain't getting' no younger.

Ask yo'self if you're really happy doin' what you doin' and if you ain't... CHANGE! Don't wait for something big to smack you back to reality. Smack yo'self!

That's what's up! . To all, stay up!

-Samoa, Alameda

From The Beat: Solid knowledge! We support this thinking a hundred percent! So what's the game plan for you to get back on track? Keep teaching!

Heaven's Newest Stunna

One big hit that happens in my life was when my brother got killed by the police. That was a big hit that stuff hit me so hard I mean it still hits me 'till this day. He got killed on February third, 2007. They shot him just for running from them that was messed up but I will never forget my brother that was a terrible thing that happen in my life.

Now I really can't say I'm over with this life cause I don't do stupid stuff for nothing only thing I'm gonna be involved in some crime if it's at least five racks or more involved in the lick.

-Young, hurt and foolish, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear of the loss of your brother. That is a terrible thing to happen to a youngster. You say that you avoid crime unless it's "worth it", in terms of money. Based on what happened to your brother, and what happened to you that resulted in you getting locked up in the Hall, is any crime worth it? What would your brother say to you about this? Is he looking down on you from heaven, hoping that you will stay out of trouble and stay safe? Is there another way to make money that won't put you at risk? We know that you must be hurting and sorting through a lot of thoughts after your brother's violent death, but we sincerely hope that you will place a high value on your life and your freedom and avoid crime altogether. If you read some of the wise words of our Beat Without writers, in the back of these pages, you will see that the high-stakes crimes can land you a big sentence and a lot of heartache. We hope that you will honor your brother's memory by quitting crime.

Things To Think About

I think about my life
I think about my past
I think about my future
I think about my destiny
I think about my desires
I think about my thoughts
I think about my habits
I think about my actions
I think about my choice
I think about my decision
I think about my opportunities
I think about my priorities
I think about my enemies
I think about my homeboys
I think about my home
I think about my baby girl
I think about my happiness
I think about my family
I think about my freedom
I think about my carnalito
I think about my dreams
I think about my inner peace
I just think a lot
About my life and everyone should too. Late.

-Indio, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's seems like you've been doing a lot of thinking. What's the conclusion from your thoughts? We would love to know about it.

A Big Huge In Your Face Reality Hit

A big hit for me that made me want to say "it's time to change" would have to be this last time I got caught up 'cause it was the second time I got caught up with a big dope case, lost hella money and also my freedom. Now I'm not going to see the streets until my nineteenth birthday.

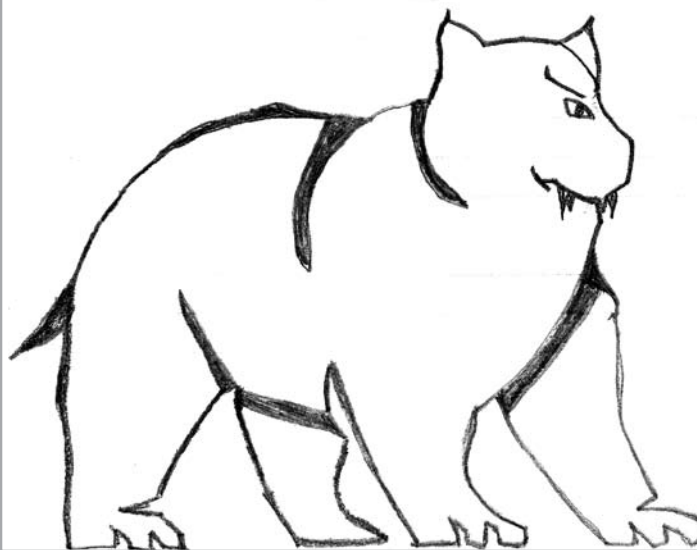
I've lost a couple of years already to the system that I'm never going to be able to get back because of the mistakes I've made. It's going to be really hard for to change my ways because once I get out I'm not going to have a job no source of income only what I have stacked up and it's going to be so easy for me to get back into the game and get back on my feet in a quickness. It's going to be hard not to get my feet wet again but I need to change my ways 'cause this is going to be my last stop in juvenile, next stop is then the pen!

The things I'm doing is going to get me federal time I'm coo' off of that, so it's time to change my ways do things the "right way" go to college get a degree and make my self very successful legit way, one that won't send me to prison for 5-10 if not longer, 'cause the game's sick it's coo' to play the game, but you also have to know when it's time to quit the game and with that it's over for now.

So until next time, to all those who know me, much love and respect that one and only

-Jeremy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Why will it be hard to correct your mistakes? Break it down! OK, you wn't have money, but money is not everything! What about taking life slowly. Find a part time job, get into school and hang with your family? You know the next step of this ride, so, what will it be? Educate your self today, tomorrow, and never stop challenging yourself until the day you get out and continue to push the envelope towards success!



Shout Out Of Love

Well the big hit in my life is this man upstairs and he made a big change in my life. He got me to realize the truth on a lot of things. I call him God. It's a big hit on my life. He allowed me to rep him.

So to all out there who read this, don't forget that even though some of you don't know me I keep all the people in prayer. And don't forget that there is a better place than this and it's called heaven. So just know that all of you in here are still being prayed for. Peace out.

-Dirty U, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How did yo ustumble upon your God? Educate us readers looking for a connection to a higher power! We appreciate your good thoughts and love for all! Continue to spread the word and your love!

Without A Beat

Cops and gangs forming their alliance, 'Cause all these kids are full of defiance And which leads to too much violence And then we ask for a moment of silence? A cycle that will never stop War in other countries to across your block Won't stop till they drop from gettin' popped Or get caught on the spot then locked Inside of me Yes inside it leaves me Leaves me with hostility, no sympathy,

-Jrc, Alameda

From The Beat: We see what you see/A system full of treachury/The evil's more than what we see/cause injustice works systematically/but if you lose your sympathy/become your own worst enemy/the only way to fight the insanity/is to hold onto your humanity/and fight for a chance to be/ something more than what they see/you're the one who can set you free!

There Is Only Two Ways

It's yo' homie Indio. I just wanted to write about five years ago, now, and five years from now. I got this subject from The Beat Within papers.

Well, here it goes...

Part One. Five years ago... I was 11 years old and living in Mississippi State with my mother, brothers, and sister. My mother took my brother, sister and me down there to show us where her homeland is and where half of my roots come from.

I say half of my roots because I'm half native and half Mexican. But I was born in Oakland, CA, so I'm really from East Oakland. But while I was down there I was hella bad, 'cause I was breaking into people's houses and was kickin' it with a sixteen years old, who I smoked weed with all the time. Then after that I started to smoke Newports.

Damn, just thinking.. back then, I was "hella" bad. I did go to jail down there too, cause I kept robbin' houses. Then one day I told my mom that I wanted to go back to Oakland, cause I missed my dad. But that was a lie. I just wanted to cut from there. Then one day, me and my mom came back to the town just to visit, but I messed up because I caught a case and they wouldn't let me go back to Mississippi. But I was glad, 'cause I didn't want to go back anyways, so we stayed and bought a house, and then my brother and sister came back up here too.

Part Two. Now. It's 2007 and I'm sixteen and I'm in jail right now, I'm in a gang now too, I still smoke weed and Newports, I still be robbin' people, but not houses. I drink now too, living a messed up life now too, been shot two times already. I rob people for their cars now. I used to sell weed.

I really don't go to school no more too. I stay out all night and don't come home until three or four in the morning, stay in and out of jail. Right now is my seventh time in here, and I really don't care no more, and I don't care if I live or die. I don't give an "ef" who's reading this shhh too. Why I don't care? Because it's DIRTY!

Five years from now I'll be 21, that is if I'm still alive the way I'm going. There's three ways I look at it.

- 1: I could be locked up for life
2. I could be dead in the street of Oakland
3. I really don't think there is a three. I'm out. Yo' homie, Indio.

-Indio, Alameda

From The Beat: Why did we choose that as your title? That might what you're thinking as you read our response to your very eloquent but confusing piece. What was confusing? What's confusing is that you conclude it with such a dark vision of your own future. Dead? Or Locked up? No third choice? Everything about that conclusion is different from what we see when we look at you. We see your pride in your work when you're choosing your name, we see someone full of Indian pride, we see someone with talent and skills, who made mistakes but didn't give up. There's more than just option three, there's an infinite number of options. You could basically do anything you ever wanted with your life. And the sky is the limit.

Listening To Luis

TBW: Where are you from?
 Luis: Oakland
 TBW: Did you grow up in Oakland?
 Luis: Most of my life.
 TBW: How old are you?
 Luis: I'm seventeen
 TBW: What High School were you going to?
 Luis: Dewey
 TBW: What's school like in here?
 Luis: It's much easier.
 TBW: Will you graduate here or at Dewey?
 Luis: I don't think I'm graduating.
 TBW: What about a GED
 Luis: Yeah, that's what I'm going to do when I get out.
 TBW: Very cool! When do you think you'll be out?
 Luis: Probably in about six months from now.
 TBW: Will you do all six months here, at camp a group home?
 Luis: I will do camp. I'm on the waiting list now.
 TBW: So you might be weeks from your first home pass! What will you do with a day out?
 Luis: I'll probably get my home pass in about two months, but I think I'll just stay home with my family.
 TBW: Who's in your family?
 Luis: I have lots of family members but at home it's just my dad. I'll also visit my mom and sisters.
 TBW: Does your dad visit you here? Anyone else visit you here?
 Luis: Since I been here, my dad only came twice but my mom comes every visiting day.
 TBW: Have you promised them you'll change some thing sin your life
 Luis: Yeah I promised them I will start going to school, and they also want me to move. But I don't want to leave my girl or my mom.
 TBW: That's understandable. Why would anyone want you to leave your girl or your mom?
 Luis: My dad don't want me to leave them but he wants me to move out of Oakland but he ask me to ask my mom to move also, and take my girl with me.
 TBW: Wow! Wouldn't that be great! A fresh start with your mom and your girl. But will/can they do it? Where would you go?

Luis: My dad wants me to move with him to Oregon because he is moving soon, but I can't 'cause I'm here my mom don't want me to move far.
 TBW: The idea is to get you away from your crew or gang or turf?
 Luis: Yeah, kind of, but more than anything he just wants me to straighten out my life and stop hanging in the street because that's why I'm here in the first place.
 TBW: Do you think things would be different, better, really, in Oregon than here?
 Luis: I don't think things would be better for my mom, because there are no good jobs out there, but for me it would I lived out there when I was a freshman so I kind of know what it's like.
 TBW: Where would you move with your mom and your girl? Any ideas?
 Now, I don't have an idea, but I'll probably stay where I'm living now with my girl. My dad thinks that would make me more responsible.
 TBW: To live with your girl? Why?
 Luis: Because then I would find me a job, and not be in the street, because I will have to feed me and her.
 TBW: Hmmm.. Yeah, maybe that would be great, but you know other ways to make money, right? What we want to know is if you girl is a strong and god influence on you?
 TBW: I'll probably find me a job because if I was to get caught on the grind then I'll be back in jail and my girl would be alone. My girl actually pushes me into doing good with myself. She doesn't like it.
 When I smoke or I'm in the street.
 TBW: This has been one of the all time great Beat Within interviews! Thanks!
 Any closing words you'd like to finish off with?
 Luis: Thank you for interviewing me, because I probably wouldn't write as much if it weren't for all these questions.
 TBW: Our pleasure! Peace!

-Luis, Alameda

From The Beat: What a great interview to read! It's true, it's one of our all time best, because you stepped up to the challenge of each question, whether spoken or written, with thoughtful answers. Reading it was like watching a picture get sketched out of your life, first the broad outlines, then the little details, then the colors that make you who you are. It was like watching a person come alive on paper. We hope you keep on writing and adding to that picture, with or without an interviewer nearby!

A Big Hit Would Be To Lose Family

What would make me change my life? Yes, it would maybe be the loss of mom or brothers, because they are all I have in this world.

I have done a lot of bad things that I now regret, it's an old saying that what goes around comes around maybe not on you but on someone you love.

Now in my teenage life I'm not really thinking like that because it never comes to mind, but yeah losing my mom or brother's right then there would have to be a change and I would maybe blame myself because of that, and I'm oldest out of two brothers and they are doing fine but they both see the crimes I admit, and they might follow my footsteps and end up killed and it would have to be a change in my life. And with all that said I should not wait for that to happen so I'm going to make a change now.

-Goonie, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you are making some huge decisions for the better Goonie. We can only hope these thoughts will be taken seriously when the time comes for you to have to make such a choice -family or streets?

... with all that said I
 should not wait for that
 to happen so I'm going to
 make a change now.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Chase story

"runnin so fast like I was in a race
 never slow down keep it at a high pace
 If I stop now I might catch a case
 This is the story of my lil chase."

I turn around and stare into the eyes of my pursuers. They are gaining ground on me, and while my energy seems to wane, their endurance kicks up a notch. I am panting for air while trying to not pass out from fatigue.

How the hell did I get in this situation? I got to go back a day to explain my journey through the jungles of my hood.

It is Thursday afternoon at Mission High School in San Francisco. I'm kickin' it with a couple of my patnas, waitin for the weekend to pop off. Little did I know then that today would be the beginning of a journey I never want to relive.

As lunch approaches and we begin to head towards our car, we hear yelling. We turn to see our enemies beatin' on a li'l homie. We run over there and smash on 'em real quick. The school security sees us and tries to take us in, but we say screw it and leave.

It's me, Freddie, Payaso, and Guerro. As we turn to go to McDonald's we get bumped from behind (in our car). We all get out and see it's one of the fools we got into it with earlier and his crew. They get out and start flashin' us their knives, so I tell Freddie to pop the trunk and get the gauge. They see it and instantly hop in and head off before we can say or do anything else. The rest of the day goes by quick without incident. We never do go back to school because we know they'll just kick us out.

As dawn approaches, I begin to head home. I get a call on my cell and it's my girl. She tells me that my cousin just got stabbed over on Alabama (Street), and that his brother couldn't reach me so he called her. I tell Freddie to head over there, it's just the two of us now. When we turn on Alabama, I see my cousin Johnny standing outside. He tells me that the enemy stabbed Rob when he was on his way home from a late night game. I get mad because they just brought an innocent bystander into this warfare. But he is guilty by association. I tell Freddie to patrol the block to see if anybody is around. As we get to Mission, I see a guy walking. I notice him as one of the guys from the school. We creep on him, but he sees us and takes off. He yells to me, "You're next, and we won't let you live like tu primo." I got hot and started shooting at him with my gun. Freddie follows him but to no luck, he is gone. We'll have to catch him on a better day.

By the time I get home, it's very early in the morning, my parents are asleep so I go in and lay down. As soon as my head touches the pillow, I'm snoring.

The next day I get up at around eleven in the morning. I

shower, get dressed, and prepare myself for battle. Payaso calls and tells me the enemy is thick at school. I call Freddie who says he is outside my house already. Once we touch down at school, I already could tell blood will be shed. We hang out 'till after school and we make our move. As soon as we go to the field where they're at, police come in. I get taken to the office by one of the cops.

This is where it all begins. He has me sitting in a chair in the office because the principle would like to speak with me. As he goes into her office to notify her, I run, full speed. He yells, but I don't listen. Then I hear cuffs jingling and I see he is on me. I hop into Freddie's car, and we are off.

We chill at Guerro's house 'till night falls, then we go hunting, little did we know we were the hunted. We see a couple of the enemies and Flaco begins to shoot. They run and we get a minor victory. But as we turn, several cars come out of a garage and follow us close. Then the shots ring out and I hear the tires' air coming out. We all get out to take cover, going bullet with bullet with these guys, until we run out. We all head in our own direction. I throw my gun and walk down the street. I hear sirens and see lights up ahead of me. I don't think they're comin in my direction, but they are. I break for it and narrowly escape.

I get a car from Flaco's house and head towards San Mateo, where my girl lives to spend a peaceful weekend. On highway 101, heading south, near San Bruno, there's cops tailing me.

No L's, a stolo, a warrant, shhh, I'm not stopping. I see lights and floor it. I exit in Burlingame and as I reach San Mateo, I crash. I'm on El Camino Real, and I know a dude lives close by. I start runnin' and then I hear my worst fear in a situation like this, 5-0 dogs. They're gaining on me so I'm forced to hit a fence to an unknown yard. I go off into a side street on Poplar Avenue.

I see cop cars comin' at me, but I'm too exhausted to run. Hoping they'll let me slide, I wait. They get out and when I see their faces, I run. They're on me. I turn and look for an escape route. I hear them saying they got me. Just when I am about to call it quits, I hear the train. I run toward the tracks and hop a couple of fences. I see the flashlights, and helicopter trying to spot me, but I'm too camouflaged. I stumble and twist me ankle. I sit down for a rest but I hear voices of the cops and the dogs. One more fence and I know in my girls window.

I'm at the safe house, free for now, until I encounter another epic chase.

-Big Vick, Alameda

From The Beat: Definitely an epic violent chase you describe Vick. You take us on a run for your life, and we are glad you are alive to tell the story. Now what? Well over a year incarcerated, do you see these types of chases ending? We hope so. You have become a very popular writer in The Beat with your raw honesty. WE hope you do not lose faith in your self and that you see a better way of living, especially when you return home.



Just when I am about to call it quits, I hear the train. I run toward the tracks and hop a couple of fences. I see the flashlights, and helicopter trying to spot me, but I'm too camouflaged.

Loyalty

Today I'm going to write about loyalty. The definition of loyal is being faithful to a cause or ideal. To me, loyalty doesn't seem to exist anymore. It may be being loyal to your girlfriend/boyfriend or to your homeboy or homegirls.

I'm sure people know what I mean loyal/faithful, to your lady/man. In the outs, everything is firme (fine) with the both of you. Being lovebirds and always spending time together.

Then one day you hear she/he is cheating on you, but don't believe it. Or one day you guys are walking minding your own business and you stop at the park and some guy starts hitting on your lady. The first thing you do is get angry and protective. So the situation turns into a fight and someone gets hurt real bad and you get locked up for her. Then a few weeks passed by and you get that letter that nobody wants. "The Break Up Letter." Maybe it wasn't meant to be. You do have someone that stays all the way with you through thick and thin, then you are one lucky person.

Now to loyalty to your homeboys/ homegirls. Everything is all well. You guys post up in your varrios ('hoods) doing the daily routine, drinking pisto (beers) and smoking some bomb, and do some dirt. Then one day shhh don't go down as planned, one person get popped for the crime you guys just committed, and that one individual starts pointing fingers saying who did this and who did that. The next thing you know, you're looking at a life sentence without an opportunity of getting out on parole, and start asking yourself what happened to "I would never snitch?"

Now to family loyalty. The same situation might happen with a family member and the first thing you would think is, that's family he would never tell. Then the next morning comes and your house gets raided and when they have you handcuffed.

Your mom asks why they're taking him and they answer "for murder." then you start asking yourself, "I thought blood was suppose to be thicker than water."

-Mono, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It seems like loyalty has been banishing throughout the years among people. How do we know who to trust and who to be loyal to? Who can be loyal to us? Have you been loyal to anyone in your life? What/Who? On the other hand, are you speaking from experience? Is this what happened to you? If so, we are sorry for your mistakes and for the current situation you got yourself into? We hope you find the strength you will need to go through all this.

Why Don't We Think About Our Lives On the Outs

My concerns while I'm in jail are my case, how long I am going to be here, etc.

I also have a lot of time to get things together, I think about my family and my girl, the life of crime I live now and how far am I going to go with it. At some point of time I am going to man up, like get a job, a place of my own, take care of myself and maybe take care of my family.

The funny thing is we don't think about these kinds of things until we get locked up. How come? Because we get so wrapped up in girls, bras, grapes, etc. We don't take the time out to think because we're free on the outs. No rules, nothing to follow.

-Goonie, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a huge insight. We've noticed this too, that being locked up really makes people take a look at their lives and actions. But the problem is it seems that often, those thoughts disappear in cloud of smoke (literally) the minute that release comes around. It's like people forget all the promises they made to themselves in their cells. Why do you think that happens?

My Life's Lesson

I was perking and a thirty-five-year-old man put his hand on my street mom. I didn't think and went off on him with one of my boys who helped me. I didn't think. I could have killed him. I could have killed this guy, even though I'm a girl. That scares me and shows me how strong I am. I found out that he was homeless, and that makes me sad. I didn't think about anything 'til I was locked in my cell.

-Love, Marin

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty, Love. That must be a hard story to tell. Maybe it was the drugs you were on and/or maybe you were really frightened this man would hurt your street mom caused you to react violently when he put his hand on her. Hopefully when you find freedom you won't be on the streets the same way you were before this latest episode. Time is now to wake up, and it sounds like you are taking some big steps too!



Rest in Paradise

I'm sorry you had to go my baby, you will always be my one only man.

You were with me through thick and thin baby, you're always on my mind and I cry every night when I talk about you.

I want to let you know that I'm sorry I couldn't see you in the hospital and you know I would if I could have

Baby, I love you with all my heart.

I would cry my eyes out every Sunday at church when I pray about you and for your family, so you know I'm always thinking about you Baby Boy. You were my baby's daddy now you're not here to watch me to make me be safe.

I can't hear your precious voice anymore so to you Baby sweet dreams and say hi to our baby for me.

I love you.

May 10, 1990-April 5, 2007.

Lonely and Baby. D for Life.

-Baby D, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The tragedy is a heavy one to accept. We hope you are talking to family and those you trust in getting through this period. We are also happy that you have the ability to express your love and sadness on paper. In the end and in your love's name you will turn your life around to a life full of happiness and progress. Best to you!

Oakland Works For The Devil

You never would forget about my town. If you adapt to that type of environment you will become part of the problem. I am myself a product of Oakland. It's like a machine you bolt in where you screw in. You lucky to show your strength up against the world Believe being a thug is a world wide fight Your convicted in your moms stomach.

I wanted to make it happen. relation is going to help me that difference. I found a opportunity in the streets threw music RIP Mac Dre I was born in sin. It's a hard knock life for you and me. Nothing but respect to all original gangsters in prison. Because it's real monsters behind those walls. And not the dark under your bed to YG's and BG's trying to get promoted stay solid. Loving memory to all the fallen

-Baby Gooch

From The Beat: The horrors you describe are real, behind bars, on the streets, in our hearts – but sorry it's not true. You are not convicted in the womb. You have the power, the potential, and most of all, the RIGHT to decide your own destiny. Is it harder to build a positive life for yourself when you're born into the streets? Of course, but is it possible. You have to expand your mind though – start thinking about college, about travel, about work, about your future. The best way to respect the gangsters, the prisoners, the people who never escaped this life, is to escape it yourself. Are you ready to do that?

You Looking At Me

You see a big strong Tongan
When you get to know me
You see he is goofy, slow and a tweak
You might see me as a crazy person
Or an alcoholic always smoking on a Newport
You looking at me, you respect me
Even though you don't know me
You see my complexion
But when I speak it doesn't match who you see
You see a person who is determined
Not scared of death
But I accept my destiny
That's why you see I cherish every breath
Now that's you looking at me

-Elisi

From The Beat: We see even more than that when we look at you. We see someone who could go either way. You have all this pride, and you should, all this respect, and you should, but you're also attached to so many dumb things: drugs, drinking, violence, danger. Which makes us wonder, what your future will be. Maybe that's what people truly see when they look at you... a question mark, wondering whether you will ever live up to all you could truly begun? Or whether you will get caught up in the b.s. that pulls you away from your loved ones. The only one who can answer that question, of course, is you.

Hella Mad Part Ten

Day dreaming in my room! I'm hella mad that y'all asked me that question, 'cause I really was just daydreaming about my girl in my room just now before I came out. I was thinking about the last time I was with her and the last time I was talking to her, cause before I came here, she had called me asking me was I still coming to her house tonight to do what I do best, ya feel me? Yeah you do.

But then when I told her I was gon' call her back, we had got in the car on our way to the movies and as soon as we got to the stop light the police had put they lights on us and it was over. I don't even want to talk about the rest -- it got ugly.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: Damn, that's a rough come down, one minute you think you're on your way to romance, the next minute you're getting cuffs put on you. You're right, it got ugly. It got ugly, and it's still ugly, because you're still incarcerated. But eventually you will be free again, and what we want to know is will you remember how bad you felt on this day? Will you use that bad memory to give you strength so you stay out of jail for good?

Beat Withinterview: Chuck

TBW: How are you doing?

Chuck: I'm cool.

TBW: What's going on?

Chuck: Followin' they bootsy ass rules.

TBW: How did you end up here?

Chuck: I'm in for robbery. It's my first time here.

TBW: Were you freaked out when you came?

Chuck: No, no, I wasn't scared. Except that the first night when was in the unit, and there was this girl goin' crazy and beatin' on the door, yellin' at us, you feel. And plus I was thinking about my bro' 'cause he is in jail too, in New York. He got three years.

TBW: In New York?

Chuck: Yeah, my family is from Buffalo. Where everybody is always snowed in?

Yep. I went down there to Buffalo for Christmas, and he went to jail in January. I made it just for the court date, and was happy that we got a chance to kick it. I just chilled with him and he was glad we got to spend time together.

-Chuck

From The Beat: By the time this Beat prints, you'll have had a lot more chances to get used to being in jail. In some ways, we sort of hope you don't adapt too much. Jail is no place to be, and you have family (here and far away) that loves you, and wants you out, and free, and with them, where you belong!

A Big Hit in my life

It's a lot of stuff that I could tell y'all what makes me want to change the way I was!

Like this one time we was driving around getting high, me and my so-called patnas, and I guess these people was trying to rob us. He started runnin' to our car with his gun out, pointing it to the driver window and my so-called potna got scared and put his head down while he was still driving, and my lil' cousin started shooting at the dude that was running up to the car and somehow the car had flipped over and. I had left my phone in the car that night! But like a month later we was driving around again and we went to the wrong spot. We was funk'n' with them, and so they started shooting at us, and one of the bullets went through the car door and hit me in the leg.

For like twenty minutes I thought I was hit, and we had went to the hospital, but before we got there I had pulled my pants down and thank God it didn't go through. That was a real miracle from God, and that's what's gon' make me change!

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: This is a great piece, Lil' Rome, you give us all a glimpse into your life on the outs and the risks you've take. Congratulations on making it past this hurdle, and given the number of young people who continue dying in Oakland, we have to agree with you. It is a kind of miracle, and it's good to hear you don't plan on wasting it. If you did, we'd be ...hella mad.

A Lot Of People....

I think I know a lot of dudes don't like me. I know a lot of people have animosity toward me. A lot of people wouldn't mind seeing me dead. There's a lot of people who love me and want to see me make it, a lot of people love what I do, and there is a lot of people who want to be my friend and get along with me.

Then you got a lot of people that think I'm a stupid person, then you got a lot of people who think I'm smart, that say I got potential and a lot of knowledge. Then you got a lot of people who wants to be in my life and a lot of people who want to step back. Then there's a lot of people that say "I don't care what happens to him," then you got people who do.

-Marcus

From The Beat: With all these people and there different ideas of who you are, and what you deserve, which one do you think sees you – the real you – the most clearly. If you had to describe the real you, what would he be? What would he dream? What would he hope for? Who would he love?

Where There is Love

Where there are dreams
 There are goals
 Where there are goals
 There is education
 Where there is education
 There is success
 Where there is success
 There is a career
 Where there is a career
 There is life
 Where there is life
 There is love
 Where there is love
 There is my mom

-Juan

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem! Even though Mother's Day is past, we sure hope you send this to your mom. We bet it makes her happy (not as happy as seeing you out and legit, of course!)

All I Want Is To Go Home And Be With My Love Ones, They Need Me

All I want is to go home, but I don't got that choice anymore. I am in here doing my time.

I been right here for almost two months. I don't want to be in here. I don't want my family to cry every time they come see me. I don't want to see them suffer to get me out of here. All I want is to get out and be with my family to take care of them and to be with my little sister.

She can't come and visit me. Her birthday is coming soon on the 21st of May, and I miss her. I cry and pray every night for them. I just hope I get out for my sister b-day so I can be with her.

So please God, help me get out of here and help my family with all this suffering and pain they going through because of me. Please don't forget about me, and help me God I'm going through all this pain every day I'm here wondering If my mom and sister are alive. Because if you can't do the time don't do the crime... Lord please help us!! Holla back Beat

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: We hear your prayers and echo them, Baby Girl. The person who can most help you though, is yourself? Now is the time to reflect, to ask yourself what is good for you? Make a list of the places you were spending your time, the people you were spending your time with. Were they positive? Are their friends, males, or places you will have to say goodbye to, for real, if you want to stay out of jail? Now not just the time for praying but also for planning. And then share those plans with The Beat! We could all use some ideas on how to make it in this world.

Daydreaming In My Room

Everyday I get up out of my bed I daydream. I think about my mom and the rest of the family, like my sister. I think about the things I could be doing on the outs. But like my dad told me, they can't keep you forever.

The way I feel is like my ninja said, "I touched down to cause hell." I think I could change my life but that would be pretty hard to do for some people.

-Hard to change

From The Beat: We hate to disagree with your Pops, but in California, with the three strikes laws, and more and more tough sentences being given to juveniles, and more and more juveniles being tried as adults, the system really can keep you forever. No joke. If you want to avoid a life spent in jail and prison, you HAVE to change your ways. Getting to see your family again is a lot better than daydreaming. Check out the wisdom of the Beat Without pieces in the back of this book to see what we mean.

No Carpet

I left the carpet
 For cement floors
 I long for that soft feeling beneath my feet
 This hard floor feels like I'm homeless
 Home sick

-Elisi

From The Beat: This is like a haiku. Just a few short lines but in them you capture a world of feeling, of loss. Home vs. the institution!

Help The Beat

Help The Beat because I like The Beat.
 The Beat helps me express my feelings a lot and release a lot of stress
 to put it on paper where people just like me can say how they feel.

I enjoy reading The Beat on a weekly basis, seeing my name in lights.
 The Beat is just like counselors that really care enough to take the time,
 not only to listen but also give me positive advice on my problems.
 Help The Beat!

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: Thank you for writing this piece. Not only because we can show it to funders to try and show them why we think workshops need to go on the way they have, but also because we can turn to these words when we have a long or stressful day trying to make the publication happen. If the Beat is like a person, the writers who put in time each week to share their thoughts and hopes and talent are like its blood. "Help The Beat!" you say. But by writing this piece, you already have.

My Dreams

My dreams are to get out of here To be with my family my mom and sister To do my time fast and get out of here To take care of my family when I get out To stand and make the things right in the future That my family will be okay and take care of them To get out for my sister birthday and be there To take care of them and be with them those are my dreams Holla back, Beat!

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: These are all bright dreams, as beautiful as stars in the sky. Now comes the hard part: It's time to reach for the stars, how are you going to do it?

This Life

This life I live ain't right. I got keep that thang on my side so when ninjas start talking that fly stuff... but now I'm going to eat on these streets.

I ain't got no job, moms doing drugs, so I got to get out here and put food in my mouth some way and I got a lil' ninja in this world so that means I got to put food in his mouth, too. So you should know I ain't getting out this game no time soon, so you can keep on talking, trying to get me out, but I'm too much of a bad ass.

I don't care about nothing no more but my son so I got to get out and show him all the love I can before I get killed in them streets and be the next one in this unit book of ninjas who died.

-Maine

From The Beat: You cover a lot of ground in your piece. Part of its bragging (we cut that out), part of it is some serious choices that you are facing in your life. Like you said, looking out for your son (and his momma?) will be job number one when you get out. But we have to tell you: dedicating yourself to raising a child, and walking around being all concerned about what a bad ass you are, are two very different things. You will soon be facing a major reality check, so get ready. Your piece shows a lot of confusion and conflict.

Big Hit With The Jaws Of Life

A big hit in my life would be when I had a car accident on November 26, 2006 and they had to use the jaws of light to get me out of the car. This was a very surprisingly moment for me, because it happened so fast. It was a wake up call for me.

-David

From The Beat: Wow! That must have been so intense. We are glad that you made it out of there and made a full recovery. Was anyone else hurt or killed in the accident? You say that the accident was a wake-up call. How has this second chance at life changed you or inspired you? We would love to hear more.

Daydreaming About My Future

I be in my room daydreaming can't wait until they release me. And thinking bout what I'm gonna do when I'm gonna get out. And what I'm gonna eat. I be thinking about my family and friends and how I'ma talk to them about jail so they won't be coming here. When I get out of here I'm gonna be on a whole 'nother level.

-Marquis

From The Beat: This is exciting! You are going to have the opportunity to turn over a new leaf when you get released. And you are right, you will have knowledge about what its like to get caught up in the system, and you can use that knowledge to help your friends break the cycle and avoid incarceration. We hope that you will stay in touch with the Beat! There are opportunities out there if you are interesting in educating others.

The Wrong Man

I'm in Juvenile Hall fighting several counts of assault with a deadly weapon. I'm facing some real time, even though I didn't do it. I think this is a wake up call, because the way I was living my life I was going to end up in jail for murder or worse death. God is giving me a sign, and I should listen to him before it's too late.

-Quintar

From The Beat: This is a huge wake-up call to get at such a young age, but you're right: as frightening and painful as it is, this experience may have positive effects in your life. It takes a lot of maturity to recognize that there is a lesson here regardless of your guilt or innocence of the charges you are facing, and you are showing that maturity within yourself in this piece.

How The System Played Me!!!!

Man in life you go through joy and pain
If you on probation it will give you a migraine
And a whole lot of stress
And a whole lot of tears
Days turn into nights
And night turn into years
I ain't happy here
I'm on another atmosphere
I have to get away
Just to get my mind clear
That's why I smoke so much
To release my stress
I got to watch my back
I'ma keep my head up...

-B

From The Beat: Probation is super-stressful because you have to be careful all the time, day and night, and keep your head up. It's really, really hard. Your poem is very good, and in the first part you describe the anguish you are going through, even on the outs. In some ways it's harder than being locked up, right? Like you said, take those moments to get your mind clear, through finding a quiet place that is your own, writing, anything. If you can keep your head up and stay out of trouble, things will get better eventually. There are other people out there who have gotten through it too.

Life Is My Big Hit!

Life makes you want to change because on the outs there is no money in the streets. People are really having to do something messed up for money.

What really makes me want to change is that it's like God sees everything. Like if you did something two weeks from now you will get caught when you are not wanting it to happen. I am not the person to rob and steal no more. Now I want to get a job and go to school every day. I am done with the criminal ideas.

-Lil' Reese

From The Beat: You can best believe that people have been known to do some of the oddest things in the name of money that comes along with regrets and consequences. With this in consideration, you should really think about what people in the streets will do to you if the price is right. We are glad you have woken up and are seeing the light. What's the plan on staying out?

Remember The Beat

I think people should volunteer to work for The Beat Program to help keep it above water. Because some people depends on The Beat every other week to see they masterpiece to make themselves feel good and practice on being a writer. That's why people should volunteer for the beat.

-Lil' Marcebo

From The Beat: This is great! The most powerful words about The Beat and the impact it has on people's lives comes from you, the writers. We'll pass along your positive thoughts to potential volunteers. We are definitely on the lookout for help, so if you or anyone else you know are interested in helping out The Beat, let us know.

A Big Hit, Was That Shot

A big hit in my life was when my big cousin got shot in the ass. I thought he was shot somewhere else, so I was mad and worried about him at the same time.

My aunt lied to me and said he got shot with a bb gun just to calm me down, but it was something that brought me closer to my family, to let me know that while family is around you have to cherish them before they really die or get killed. But it happened when I was younger, so my aunt tried to lie to me and I just found out that he really got shot for real.

-K

From The Beat: You discovered a great truth at a young age, and you say it so well. We have to cherish our family members before it's too late. Did your cousin survive the shooting? Do you still feel mad at your aunt for lying to you, or do you think she was trying to protect you since you were so young? It must have been very scary.

A Slight Change

I'm writing about bein' locked up and away from my baby momma and how I'm messin' up a lot of shhh, but hopefully I'm goin' back to her as soon as possible.

I went to court on the 19th of April and my P.O. came and told me she sending me to my big brother's in LA. So I'm lightweight Charlie Hustle 'cause I gotta stay away from Oakland and I'll be with my baby mama, my brotha and my cousins, but it's only like for six months to clear my probation. So it all worked to my advantage. RIP Christian.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: So far we don't hear that much of an advantage...the system is still making all these decisions for you - about where you will live, who you will stay with, what part of the state you'll be in - and it sounds like you're comfortable with that...but don't you want to be the one in control of your life? What will it take to put you back in the driver's seat of your future?

See Her Bloom

I'm daydreaming in my room
Trying to sweep away my problems
But I have no broom
Hoping and praying that I'll be with you soon
I got a baby on the way
I need to see her bloom
Like a seed into a flower

-Satan Jr.

From The Beat: With a poem this strong and elegant, one that ends on your love and prayers for your precious daughter, we have to take issue with your name change. We liked the old one "Da President" much better - it showed your ambition, your humor, your leadership potential ... But The Beat is all about freedom of speech, so if you want to call yourself Satan, we'll respect it, and print it. But remember in our hearts, we'll always think of you as the president.

Calling Out To All Volunteers

Man The Beat go dumb ya'll stupid if ya'll tryna stop The Beat, ya'll crazy man on the real.

-Danny Phantom

From The Beat: Although your piece is brief you just said a whole a lot, so we got to respect it! With much love and respect, thank you for sharing yourself and support.

Money, Money, Money

Young money made me rich
 I used to extort but I got the chance to switch
 To a professional career I reaped benefits like fruits
 I pulled up to the spot, black hoodie, black Timberland
 boots
 Lookin' like the prince of darkness, young money put me
 here
 I show no fear for anybody who can't see my vision clear.

-Marko

From The Beat: This poem is like a poison apple. Bright, shiny and perfect on the outside, it conceals the harm inside the story. Making money off the spot involves the exploitation of others. Violence. Suffering. What exactly is your vision?

I Feel Betrayed

I'm hella mad right now but I also feel betrayed. I just received a phone call from my PO and the news she gave me was nothing good. I'm mad because everything caught me by surprise and I haven't stopped thinking about it since.

I don't know what I'm going to do now, either beast it or keep it cool? She just came to interview me last week and she was making things sound like everything was gon' be OK, talking 'bout "Oh! It sound like you got a plan" and gon' say I'm gon' recommend you stay 'till you 18 and release you. Now she hollarin' and my supervisor said six months. That's why I feel betrayed, 'cause she told me you gon' get out, now talkin' about staying. That's the kind of stuff I don't like, but I go to court in the morning so we gone see what God have in store for me tomorrow.

-Doug E. Fresh

From The Beat: This piece shows a lot of maturity. Instead of cussing out your PO, or just saying over and over that you're mad and stressed, you lay out the whole situation, explain the details and how it makes you feel betrayed, and then move on to hoping it works out. It's like just the writing it down made some of the anger go away. And as for your dilemma, we know from the terrific writing you've done since then (next week's Beat, look for it), we already know you chose to keep it cool. This piece made it clear that you were planning to take the adult's approach!

Time To Go

Lookin' at the same ninjas every breakfast, lunch and dinner we get the same plates. every day same routine, go to bed, wake up, go to school, no t.v. 'Cause ninjas wanna mess u up

don't send the group just sent they ass up! but now I'm used to it, I'm not stressin' and I'll never be helpless.

I ain't helpless, I got power in the heart.

What makes you think that I'm falling apart.

All day every day, sittin' in my cell, laying on the bed reading my mail.

But I keep my head up, and let shhh flow,

Keep tellin' my PO

it's time for me to go.

-Michael

From The Beat: We like the way this piece of yours jumped from rhyming to not rhyming, it's like you have the thoughts in your head that you're turning into a flow, because having a flow makes it easier to get through

What's Up Beat?

Me just up in Camp, I'm thinking of running but I can't I mean I can but I just want to pimp my program. I can't wait 'till I get my home pass. Damn it be so hot up here, it just makes you want to drink a cold beer sometimes I think what girls are wearing, I just wish I'll be out there cheering and staring.

-O

From The Beat: Yes, running would be a huge mistake. Do your program so you can get back to enjoying your life free of the system. It's not going to be easy, but if you want your freedom you'll make sacrifices and you will succeed.

My Regrets

Locked up in here is stress. I can't see my mom or my little sister and little brother, and I'm locked in here thinking about what I was doing wrong, and how I was hurting people.

I regret what I was doing out there. I miss all my boys but I can't wait to get out and see my girl and just give her a hug.

-Lil' Tez

From The Beat: In a crazy way, regret could turn out to be your best friend. Because if you're in your room, thinking hard about how you've hurt people, this might be that "wake up call" that gets you back to where you want to be in life. Your little brother and sister must miss you so much, and soon you'll be back with them, and with your girl... what will you need to change in your life to make sure that you never have to feel this regret again?

Life

Until I got locked up, I barely realized what I had.

Yea, I bang. I don't plan on stopping now.

No matter what it's gonna stay wit' me

I can't lie I thought about it before.

I got a family that loves me and I realize I had a few real friends.

The Beat go\ but they struggling cause they fundings' gone\ please help them out cause it's helping us out\ it always brings up the positive

-Lil' Solo

From The Beat: Now that your realizing how good that something was now that it's gone, don't you think that it would be wise to do everything in your power to make sure that your not playing with risk factors that can take you away from everything that means that world to you.

Carelessness

Carelessness could get you smoked for you wannabe gangstas, hurry up and drop out "boys" let the real men do the job.

-Hollow T.

From The Beat: And for you youngsta!? This careless life isn't meant for nobody unless your mission is to go to prison or find yourself six feet under!

God's Eyes

What does God see when He looks at me? A good boy. Someone who wants to be someone in life His child -Timoteo From The Beat: This part of you, this good boy, is the part of you that you need to focus on, encourage, strengthen. How will you do that? How will you teach yourself to become the best of who you are? I Lost A Family Member to Gang Violence I lost my cousin at a party, because his friend got into with some gang members, and they left the part and came back and shot a kid with dreads who they thought was the one who was talkin' mess.

But it wasn't it was my cousin, he was only thirteen in and in the seventh grade. He also had a future of wanting to become a NFL football player. Well all that was just a dream.

And the bad part of it is, he got shot in the head and nobody called the cops, everybody just ran and left my cousin by himself, and the bad thing about his best friend ran to my cousin's and told his mama (My cousin Annie) and she had a heart attack. But she was fine to be alive, and sad to what happened to our son.

-Victor

From The Beat: This is horrifying, we are so sorry you lost your cousin, and in such a senseless way. We hope that at least one person who loved him (hopefully you), was touched by his loss in a way that made you want to do something. It would be wonderful to build something great in this world - a house, a school, a family, a piece of art, that could bear his name and carry it on. Peace

All Volunteers

The reason why people should help out with The Beat Within because it really helps you deal with all your problems and lets you get all your emotions out by writing and drawing

I plan on going to help out at The Beat when I get out because it's really helped me out through this time in my life so that's why you should go volunteer at The Beat Within.

-Stranger

From The Beat: Good looking for the support. We're glad you choose write on this issue to let the world and other Beat Writers know just how much the beat means to you personally, and how it's had an affect on how you deal with things on the inside. Speaking out like this through your writing is a good way to advocate yourself

Carelessness

This is when you hit a lick on somebody
You're careless for someone 'cause if you hurt them you
don't care.

So most people hit licks they careless for other.
Or if you kill somebody you careless for that persons'
family
'cause you know they gone be really hurt.

-Drew

From The Beat: That's true, all you have to do is see the funeral of a murdered person to see that a lot of innocent people suffer when somebody gets killed. What does it mean when everybody's hitting licks, stealing shhh, taking money off people? Is carelessness contagious, like the flu?

Rest in Peace

Rest in paradise, Lil' Ant, 'cause you brought paradise to the block. you made everybody laugh, remember you flap, cavo and them playin' b-ball on the four, give up my spot and the gates to let you in heaven's door.

The last day we saw you you was on the turf in a white stolo, yo' grill was gleamin' Lil' E raised the shorty up and played like he would shoot!! Next day I see written the block in black spray paint, RIP Lil' Ant. You left us behind gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: Thank you for a moving tribute to Lil' Ant, one that brings him to life and also brings your feelings for him to life. Even if it's only for a moment and a memory, we appreciate you sharing that with our readers.

Stereotyped

The pain and pressure of being misunderstood,
they don't see us as a person;
they see us as what we do wrong, and why we are here.

They separate us 'cause we are minorities
we all doing the same thing and dressing alike
wearing the same hairstyle,
so they stereotype us as bad people.

-David

From The Beat: The hard thing about stereotypes is that it's hard to do well in life when people are expecting the worst of you. What do you think people assume about you, specifically, when they look at you? What do you wish they saw instead? What can you change about your actions to help project the image of yourself that you want people to have.

Daydreaming In My Room

Daydreaming in my room, as I sit in my room from day to
day

I dream of being at home with my family and the homies,
this shhh runs through my head I always think of getting
out of here.

All I can think about is getting out of here and going home.
I just want to get out and not come back here.

-Young Squeeks

From The Beat: What will you do upon going home? Can you live a life free of incarceration? What will be the biggest challenge for you upon getting out?

RIP Hb

All I want to see is my cousin back. I want a lot of things,
but more I want my cousin back.

If I had one wish, I want my cousin back in my life. I
want to see my cousin so bad. I love my cousin. If I can
find the person who shot my cousin, I'll cry and tell my
brother.

I want to be a good person. I just want peace in the
hood. Ninjas need to stop killin' and just deal with it.

Why did my cousin have to go?

Why at a young age? Why young people have to die so
young. I love my cousin so much.

Respect it or get disrespected. Stop killing young
ninjas.

-Lil' New New

From The Beat: Oh how we wish we had an answer for you, some magic explanation for why there is so much suffering and loss in the world. We don't, all we can offer is hope. And that hope for something better comes from pieces like this, from what it means to us when we find young people who manage to speak up for peace, for justice, and for a better world, even when they are dealing with their own personal pain. Yes. Stop killing young people. Thank you for adding your voice to the cry.

Daydreaming In My Room

When I'm locked up in my room I daydream about when
I'm gonna get out and change my life and how my mom
feels about my incarceration. How my family and friends
feel. My friends are probably wondering where I'm at. My
little brother cries every time I call and I daydream about
KFC. I want some chicken and Chinese food. I wanna go
home. I hate this place or this so called institution.

When I get out I'm not going back but another I
daydream about is camp. I can't wait to go to camp
because my home visits and get reunited with my family.
I wanna go home change my life.

Beat Within what advice do you have for us juvenile
delinquents about getting out of here doing good because
I see you guys give advice after each piece, so peace.

-Thizzy

From The Beat: The best advice we can give you is this, pay close attention to your dreams because they may be telling you something of value relating to your present and future. Looking at what you are saying in this piece, it would probably be fair to say that the best person to seek advice from is yourself. This is why it is to be real, honest and confident with what your telling yourself.

Nightmare

I was running, fast, with my best friend and faster and
faster, then boom!

He falls next to me grabbing me and bringing me
down to the floor

I look at him and ask is he hit, is he hit, and the whole
time he's just screaming help! Help! Then he jumps up
trying to get me up.

But I can't move, then I realize I was hit and he was
screaming help for me,

I look down and realize there was two bullets through
my chest,

a person ran up to me, an old friend that I thought
was going to help me

until I see a gun pointed to me, then he aims at my
friend and empties the clip on him. Then he runs away
in to the darkness, and an ice cream man pulled up and
threw me into his truck and took me to the hospital...

Then I woke up sweating on this hot ass day and was
told that The Beat was here.

-Jr. C

From The Beat: What a nightmare. WE imagine you have seen plenty on the streets to have such a dream. What will you do to make you life a safe life free of violence?

A Woman's Worth

A woman's worth
 What is it really worth?
 It's worth millions,
 One day it will be billions
 Then it will really start building.
 All of us ladies gettin' abused,
 We either win it or lose,
 I ask the questions,
 What did I really choose?
 I need something that's worth a woman's worth
 As I ask God
 Do really have, do I have a lot
 My friends that got shot
 Me in jail 'cause I got caught.

-Tabatha

From The Beat: You say you need something that is worth a woman's worth, but don't you already have that? Look within, at the strong voice inside you, the place this poem came from. That strong self, that's you! That's Tabatha's worth, and it's infinite.

Love Is Love Hate Is Hate

What I see on these streets is hate
 the way you went down
 all I had is hate
 I couldn't show no love to no one
 I couldn't even show moms or my girl love
 it hurt me when she left me
 I prayed a thousand times that she come back to me
 I'm writing this to express my feeling now
 that I have no more hate
 I can tell the people I love them,
 that I can love.

-Lil' Quis

From The Beat: How did you rid yourself of hate? Glad love has come to you. We hope this isn't just words.

Since I got locked up I got people
 out there sufferin' because of me.
 That's why it's time to change.

What's Good Beat?

When I'm locked behind my door I just daydream of getting out of here. I just can't wait 'till I get out. I made a bad choice and ended up in here. When I'm in my room I daydream about being on the outs back on the block away from the hall. I miss pulling "All nighters" with the homeboys, and being at home with my brother.

My lil' brother Carlos is only six years old he cries when I'm not home because I'm here. Sometimes I want to cry with him but I gotta try to stay strong. I got a couple of weeks left so I'm doing my best to be good.

Well that's that Beat! I'm back to my cell....

-Hitter

From The Beat: The time is now to drop the "hitter" shhh, and be the loving son and brother that you can be, otherwise there will be plenty more tears being shed.

The Sentence

I am glad the judge sentenced me to Camp Sweeney now that I think about it. The few reasons that I am glad to be here is for one, that if I were still in the outs with all my freedom I would be a disaster.

Secondly I think that if the judge hadn't sentenced me here, the relationship with my parents, that I have now, I think I wouldn't have if I were with all my freedom. I guess I would have to say that the drugs would have a big impact in my life if I had all my freedom. So I guess that I thank the judge for my sentence because my life would have been a disaster or a mess.

-TheoryOne

From The Beat: So, what must you do upon returning home so the disaster doesn't return? Tell us more!

Calling Out To Volunteers

If I had something to say it would be to keep the program going 'cause I love to read in the Beat the way people feel or how their life has been. It always inspires me. It is very rare to talk to people from other counties and states unless you receive a letter from one of them.

So would you please keep this program going because I'm still going to be in camp for 6 months, and the whole time I want to read and write poems.

-Beat Writer

From The Beat: You know we will do everything in our power to give you this program. Until the wheels fall off!!

Make A Change

Well Beat I been a gang banger for a couple of years and now I have to change even though I don't want to. I need to do it for the better because my family needs me at home, and my baby's mama needs me too, but I stayed down for my gang, and now there are things going on that I can't control because I am locked up.

But if I changed, it would be different. I wouldn't have come back this time, but I did the crime so I got to do the time. Since I got locked up I got people out there sufferin' because of me. That's why it's time to change. Well Beat, I am out 'till next week.

-Ryan

From The Beat: One thing you could do is ask yourself what are the five things you are getting from being in a gang. That lifestyle fills some hole in you, some need, right? So tell us (you) what it is that it provides. Friendship? (Where will you go to make other friends? Or are there some in the gang life whom you could persuade to quit without you) Money? (What kind of job could you get) Fun? (What kinds of other things are fun for you, that don't involved messed up actions?)... you see where we're going here? It will be a lot easier to quit the gang once you've found other ways to fill the hole it fills in you.

Bad Decisions

Coming here changed my life, it touched me.

When I get out of here I'm going to start a new life.
 I'm going to watch what I say and I'm gonna try to help my country.

While I'm in my room everyday I daydream about being home with my mom, dad and my brother, watching TV together again

it would feel so nice.

I'm not like anyone in here I'm a nice caring person and I have friends that care about me and my family that loves me.

I just want to go home to my family who I love.
 I wish the judge could understand me and my feelings.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Well, what must you do to get that shot back home? Only you have the answer.

Daydreaming In My Room

Hello there Beat. This is your boy Johnny! Let me tell you a story that I often daydream about. It was when I was out this last time. I was kicking it with one of my boys. Damn, me and that homeboy were like brothers. We still are. It's just he's now in the max unit doing big time!

Well anyways, we were chilling and we were getting all messed up. We were drinking hello forties and getting drunk. Then we rolled up a fat one. Damn, we got all twisted in my garage (as usual) slumping some Mac Dre, you know we was chillin', doing our thang, and just having a good time.

My cousin and my homeboy are like brothers. To tell you the truth Beat, we've been through thick and thin, to hell and back! We robbed people together, got chased by the cops together, been so messed up together! There were times when we almost fought each other. Like bros would usually do.

I mention this because I just sit in my little cell and just think about these good days. Damn, I miss my brothers, especially the homeboy, because he's probably going to the "Y" (CYA).

Well not really all nighters because we would end up to messed up and fall asleep. Me and my carnal did a lot of fun shhh together. To my homeboy that's doing hella time, don't let no one get you down! Keep your back straight and your head up, because pain is only temporary...

-Johnny

From The Beat: But just take a look at where all this (carnale's fun) have gotten you and them. What's sp fun about it? Is it fun now that you're facing the consequences? Do you have any regrets from the dirty things you've done and the people you've hurt? You should!

My son

Well I've done many careless things in my life, but the most recent careless act I've committed was running away from a group home.

I just ran to be out and chill, but what I didn't know was or what I didn't realize was that I was missing the most important months of my child's life. He's eight months old now.

I've only knew him for about two months. When I think about the times I spent out, I don't regret it. I had fun. But when I think about that I do.

When I think about how my son is out there not really knowing what his father's face looks like, I regret it the most.

-Robert

From The Beat: It is very sad to have a son out there who is expecting the warmth, support and love of a father, and he's not able to get it. You are his daddy... his first teacher, his first role model, the first person who will show him what manhood means. That's a heavy responsibility, but if you accept it, it will also lead to the greatest joy you can ever know. Don't deny it to yourself.

My Dream

Well, Beat it's that one and only Baby D and I want to tell you what's on my mind today and what I dream about.

Everyday I dream about having a party for my niece that just turn one year old and my sister chillin' and my ex-man there to show respect.

Well my dream was very happy and will someday come true and to Richie, I love you baby, rest in paradise hear our song "Me and You" and "Always and Forever."

-Baby D

From The Beat: You have many reasons as to why you should leave the lifestyle that brings you to juvenile. You have your sister, your niece, and your ex who is RIP. In his name, live a life that is productive and positive! What's the game plan?

Daydream

When I'm in my room, I daydream about being at home with my wifeyI can't wait to see her I miss her so much. She always writes me and makes my day go by better!

Also I thank her so much 'cause if you read my other story about my parents! I thank her for going to my house, helping out my mom and take care of my family. I love her so much for that.

-Crash

From The Beat: Girls like the one you have are hard to find. If we were you, we would do anything just to keep her. What are you willing to give up for her?

Carelessness

I was supposed to stay home with my lady and just kick it, but my homey ended up calling me 'cause he had a G-ride and needed somewhere to go. He came through, then I told my lady I wasn't going to let him go by himself, so I went with him and drove the car while my lady was all pissed off, but I didn't care. It was the homey, but anyways I ended up staying in Gilroy for a few days.

Luckily I didn't get caught with another charge. I've been here for five months just waiting to go to the Ranch.

-Looney

From The Beat: Luckily you didn't get another charge, but you still got locked up and who knows for how long. Now that you have all this time on your hands, waiting to go to the ranch, waiting to serve out your time, have you asked yourself whether or not it's time to get some new homeys?

Carelessness

I remember one time I was at school and the day was going great. I was spitting game at dumb ass females. So I'm feeling "mac-ish" like I always am. I was walking home and one of my classmates wanted to hang out. I'm on probation and he was too. I was big headed and didn't care what was gonna happen the rest of the day 'cause I got at like 8 females like in one hour. Half of them wanted to kick it the next day.

So, I'm walking home and he wants to stop at the store. We do and he steals 5 bottles of MD 20/20. I'm thinking to myself, "what the hell am I doing!" but I was in a good mood.

So we go to my projects and start chuggin, 'cause it is kind of a weak drink, only 20% alcohol so I'm tryin to catch a buzz. We do and we had only one cigarette and wanted some more. So we go down the street and ask my homeboy. He gave us five, but they weren't Newports, so I was mad, but we smoke 'em anyway. We go to the store next door and one of my potnas was a 'lil drunk 'cause he chugged a whole one by himself.

None of us stop, so he starts acting a fool and takin' chips and pushes the cash register. I'm trying to tell him to stop and he gives for the cigarettes, so I walked out not caring 'cause I didn't do anything!

But I get home and I get a knock on my door. It's my potna and he gave me a pack of Newports. We're smoking some and cops roll by. They make a u turn, came back and he ran. I didn't 'cause I had no reason to. Six more cop cars came, one of them had the store owner and he described us.

The rest is I'm writing in The Beat now!! All 'cause I wanted to get some drank and I was big headed.

Just plain old carelessness.

-Too Sweet

From The Beat: Even if you didn't do anything, you were part of by being there. You broke a bunch of laws even before things got out of hand. Tell us (and yourself) the truth: What would happen if you decided to quit drinking today, and not pick up another drop of alcohol until your 21st birthday? We'd bet one thing - we probably wouldn't see you in The Beat Within!

Carelessness

Hey what's up Beat? Today's topic is about carelessness. The question they're asking is, "Has there ever been a time when carelessness caused tragedy in your life." Yes there has, and it was the time when I just got released from the hall.

I was on house arrest, kicking it with some homies and getting drunk. I got hella drunk and went to smoke a cigarette outside. Then the homies that I was with decided to leave. Then I wanted to leave too. So, I was talking with them for a while and then they told me "just chill fool u just got out."

That's when I said, "Whatever, I'm gonna come right back in a while anyways." So then I left and to make a long story short, I ended up doing a beer run on Safeway. Then I went around jacking car's stereos and other things. After that cause of carelessness, I ended up jacking a car. Later that night, I ended up getting caught up and going to the hall.

Ever since the beginning of October 06, I've been locked up -- all because of carelessness. So next time, think about something before you say you don't care 'cause it can effect you and the rest of your life.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We're glad you've learned your lesson. Or are you going to follow what you're advising? What will be next upon your release? What will you do differently? Break down your plans!

Oh Man, A Big Hit

What's up Beat? A big hit that happened to me while I have been locked up is that my mom and dad are deciding to get a divorce which sucks a lot. It's hard because I got a lil' brother who is very young and two younger sisters that are seven and eight.

What sucks so much is that I'm not there to be the man, like I'm suppose to be! To take care of them and be there for them!

Well, yeah so that's a big hit for me, so when I get out I'm stepping my game up, be a man, get a job, and get out the system!

-Crash

From The Beat: You're talking maturely and we like that about you. After your father, you're the one who has to set the example and become more responsible for the family. They need you so much and they are expecting your help. We hope the seperation will only bring all of you closer together. Stay strong!

Daydreaming

Daydreaming in my room
Hoping that I get out soon
I wonder why I love this life
That brings me nothing but strife
I put it down and earned my name
And I have never banged just for the fame
I was raised into this lifestyle
If I said anything else I would be in denial
I was meant to live this way
But I'm in desperate need for better days
But it was my decisions that brought me here
And because of that I won't shed a tear
And I'm not part of my game
No matter what, I have an abstract mind
Even when I'm doing time.

-Worm

From The Beat: You can make better days for your life... but not if you cling to this idea that you were "meant" to live this way. You weren't. You were MEANT for great things, for the chance to live on this earth as productively and happily as you could - you were meant to leave something of beauty for the next generation, you were meant to make something of yourself. It's your right as a human being. Just reread this poem... you'll see that you have great things in you (Poetry, for one!). Why waste them on a deathstyle?

The Scar

An experience that changed my life is when I came back to San Jose from Fremont. My brotha Eric and my cousin Zac showed me love! I used to fight everyday at my school and they always had my back.

One day I was on house suspension, and I heard one of the teachers talking, so I got hella mad I walked out to the front of the school. My brotha Eric chased after me, when I got to this big window, I hit the window and it shattered to pieces and sliced my arm and hand up.

I still got a scar to remind me of it. This experience taught me not to take my anger out on windows no mo'.

-D-Mani

From The Beat: Are you in here for things that happen when you're angry? Have you got those problems under control? We're glad you survived your bout with the window, but now we wonder - are you getting help dealing with your emotions? Anger management classes? Support from home? Anything? We hope so, because that shattered glass wasn't just a warning about windows, it was a warning about your life.

Changes

A what's going on Beat? This is Jose coming from this unit. Well a big reason I want to change is because of my mom. She's been to hell and back is the reason. I say this because back in 2003, my mom lost her son Juan. He was my big bro'.

He was the oldest in the family. He was going to be my parent's right hand man, but unfortunately he died.

People always tell me that I have to get over it, but it's not something I have to get over, but something I have to learn and to live with. Now I have to step up and I have a big responsibility to be the right hand man, 'cause my family is only getting older and not any younger.

The other big reason I want to change is for my lil' sister and my lil' brother. I love them to death. They are my everything. When I talk to her on the phone, it makes me sad because she starts crying that she misses me taking her to the park. She always sends me drawings and letters and they put a smile on my face. For her, I want to change because I wanna be the best brother.

To her, I'm going to protect her to the fullest and I'm going to make sure, if she ever needs to talk to someone about her problems, I'll be that one.

I know it's important for people to always have someone to trust. I tell her not to trust her no friends 'cause they all talk behind your back and that's real. It might sound like I'm soft, but I really don't give a hell what you think 'cause that's the way I feel about my family.

To my sister, I'll be out the Ranch soon and to my mom and dad, I love you, thanks.

For all you locked up, just remember everything happens for a reason.

-H

From The Beat: You have a strong reason to succeed and you know for sure who that is. Your sister needs you and she'll need the guidance to better roads that you've walked through. If you really care for them, you should show it, not with words but with actions, improvements, achievements, and much more. Can you do that? Or rather, we already know you can. But WILL you?

Time Waits For No One

Time keeps on slippin', slippin' into the future. Time waits for no one and if we don't get our act together while we still have time, it will run out on us before we know it.

I thought changing my appearance, like dying my hair two different colors I would change myself. In a sense of being a different person, but you need to change on the inside. 'Cause the outside doesn't do it.

-Princess

From The Beat: Now you're thinking!! Keep thinking about ways you need to improve! You're heading down the right path!

Carelessness: The Race

A simple act of carelessness can cause a huge misfortune in your life. I remember a time when I was very careless. That day started out very normal. Me and my friends went out to eat when we received a phone call from another friend, telling us to come over and hang out. So we all agreed. Once we've all finished our food, we all got ready to leave.

When my friend got an idea to race there to see who'll get there first, everyone thought it was a fun idea and agreed to it. We all thought it was fun and harmless thing, but it didn't end very amusing.

Once we all took off everyone left in a rush. We were in total of five cars, after about five minutes or so we finally exited onto 101, I saw one of my friend dripping next to me so I looked over and flipped him off.

Once I focused back on the road in front of me I realized that I was about to crash into a large Pepsi truck, I tried to dodge it then lost control of the car and crashed into the thing that divided the freeway in half. I flipped the car and totalled it.

Luckily my injuries weren't very serious. I was acting careless for only one minute by not paying attention on the road and resulted in flipping the car. So what I'm trying to say is don't act careless because you won't know what would end up happening.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: The real careless thing was deciding to race to school in your cars. That's going to lead all of you to accelerating at yellow lights, focusing more on your competition than the road ahead, speeding, and switching lanes too fast. A car is basically a huge bullet: a speeding thousand pound potential death machine, and the people that could die are you, your friends, and innocent strangers. What were you thinking? (And we're glad you ended up OK after what sounds like a terrifying accident.)

Day Dreaming

I always day dream about me being back with my family and not getting locked up and doing things right like being a good role model to my little brothers and sisters and watch them and be there for them when they need me. I'll also take my little brother to his basketball games at his school and then maybe when he got a little bit older I would take him to my basketball games. And then someday I would have my own family and have kids and buy them anything they want.

-Martin

From The Beat: This daydream can come true once again, right? What's stopping you? The time is now to work on getting back on the right page with your family and over time yes one day you will be a loving father and husband, until then you do what's right as a loving older brother and loving son!

Turning Point In My Life

Hey Beat, what's crackin? Me, I am good. Just like y'all, I am looking for funding too.

I am going to write about a remarkable turning point in my life. And that is right now. The reason why I say that is because I am pregnant and that changed my life in so many ways. Because it's not about me anymore. It's about my baby.

It changed me in so many ways. That's all I care about right now. Even if I wasn't pregnant, I would change because I am almost 18 and it's time to grow up and be responsible. I really don't have time to chop it up. So, I am going to cut things short.

So, to all who is doing time, take care and keep y'all heads up. I'll holla at y'all at a better time.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Stay healthy, eat well, don't get lazy, stay sharp and prepare yourself for the job of your life, your child. Best to you in doing the right thing!

My Big News

Well Beat this your Sarah (Baby D.) I just found out that my man died this early April, 2007 from a coma because of a car chase in Sunnyvale.

My one true love was in a coma while I'm locked up thinking he's all right and shhh. Well I just want to say that was a big change for me in my life. I don't want to be sitting in here not knowing what's going on with my people and family.

I want to be alive and change for a reason not 'cause I'm scared, but because I'm young and want to live a good and long life.

I want to say sweet dreams Baby Boy. Rest in paradise Richie.

-Baby D

From The Beat: Sadly, for better or for worse life goes on and doesn't, as you sadly know, doesn't wait for anyone. The time is now to get your life back on track. Pull in the proper support and move forward. Be honest with yourself!

The Beat Helps Us

I'm worried about our Beat Within because it's our only way to actually express ourselves in here, and our ways to get good advice. The Beat helps us get through our time in here a lot easier. I really don't want The Beat to not come anymore.

If I was out I would volunteer because I think it would be fun coming to juvi hearing kids stories. Giving good advice and helping others.

So please, can anyone take time outta their schedule to help us be happy and be able to get through our time faster. Thank you.

-Lauren

From The Beat: For your information, we have host of volunteers taking the steps to eventually become Beat facilitators!

Daydreaming In My Room

Well, when I was in my cell today, I was daydreaming about me on my beautiful lady. Were walkin' on the hot sandy beach in Puerto Rico. Well we were walking, the warm sand was going between my toes, and oh it felt so good.

As we finally got to our destination on the beach, my lady pointed out to me that there was a remote stickin' out of the sand. As I walked toward and reach to pick it up, there were buttons on it that said rewind, fast forward, go back and go forward. So as I push the go back button, and my daydreaming was over.

I opened my eyes and looked around and saw that I was still in my cell.

Well ya "Beat" that as much daydreaming as your gonna get out of me, hahah!!! Well yeah times running out, so ya' gotta rap it up, so I'm gonna be out, late!

-Tim

From The Beat: Too bad the piece ended, great start! You know, you can make it a reality if you put effort into it. Wouldn't it be fun! It sounds fun, what are you waiting for to make a reality?

First Day -- Careless With My Car

A time that I was careless was when I just came up on a car and my friend kept on asking me to drive.

I know he didn't know how to, but I let him anyway and ...sure enough a couple blocks down the idiot crashed into a light pole. I was knocked out for a quick second but right when I came to I was already gone with the wind.

I didn't even have the car for a day.

-Angeles

From The Beat: Ugh, what a disaster! You could have died! Did you fix the car? Was your friend OK? How long ago was this? This is terrible, and we hope you never ever let a non-driver behind your wheel again! But we are glad you made it through.

Wasted Time

Wasting my time here in the hall, trying to make at least one call. Why even bother no one picks up the phone, I'm just here left alone. "Hope you get out soon" That's what they all say, I doubt they mean it.

My sister's crying every night. I'm just here trying to make everything right. Nothing else to do, but keep my head up and chest out, because sooner or later I'll be out.

-Shyboy

From The Beat: What are your plans to make things right? Do you plans?

A Shroom Trip

My only time I ever tried shrooms, I was kickin' it with a few homies. At first, it was cool until the sky turned dark and other colors. My boy started speaking slow motion, and I fell and hit my head hard on the driveway.

I guess I passed out, 'cause they kicked in hard all at once, and I couldn't handle it. My homie thought I was playing around, so he didn't caught me when I fell.

After this, I started trippin' out. I can't even explain it. My mom had to sit in the backseat with me on the way to the hospital.

When I got there, everyone was pointing and laughing at me. I'm not sure if they really were or if I was just tripping. The nurse told me, "your eyes are big enough to have babies out of." That didn't help my bad trip. This drove me to change.

I never tried shrooms again. What I learned from all of this was every end begins with a start. If you kill someone in the line of duty, they become your slave in the after life. Don't shroom!

-Lil' Wyno

From The Beat: Thank you for such as message. Lucky everything turned out to be OK with you. Sounds to us this experience taught you a big lesson. The excessive of any type of drugs can end any person to the hospital or to a grave. You were lucky this time, and we hope you never risk your life as you did. Now, you have to focus on the things you have to do to stay out of this place because this is a big problem as well.

The Death of My Grandpa

Today I'm going to write about an event that changed my life. Well this happened a couple years ago, and it was my grandpa's death. It changed my life around because I was always depressed, so I started to smoke marijuana and drink alcohol everyday.

I was very close to him, but I remember the last time I seen him, I did not treat him very good. So now I regret talking shhh to him behind his back. It also changed me because you never know when your parents could pass away. So treat them with respect.

-Luis

From The Beat: We are so sorry you had to lose someone you loved... and that you have to feel this regret about how you treated him. It's not too late to make it up to him, though. All your grandpa wanted for you was for you to have a good life, to make something of yourself. Are you going to do that? For you? For him? For everyone who cares about you? Drugs and alcohol will just make you more depressed, find a new way.

Drifted On A Memory

Day dreaming in my cell
Thinking about my man
And this firme (good) homegirl that likes me
Day dreaming in my cell
About going to the ranch
And if I'm gonna run, or not.

-Juzette

From The Beat: And daydream about the painful outcome that comes with running! Stay put! Do your program!

Death For Thrills?

There are many times in my life where I've been careless when doing things. Many times I drive my friends around, drifting and driving 140mph. Some say they like the thrill, some say I'm crazy, and I'm never driving them again. I smile and just laugh while saying "ok."

As I look back, there are times that I put my friends in danger and harm. I know that if I crashed and one died, I would be devastated. I have got a speeding ticket, but yet I still decide to do it, the second I leave the cops sight.

I realize these acts for thrills and excitement could easily be death warranting and when I get out and start to drive again. I will think about the consequences and possibility of my death or my friends. Hopefully I will make the right decision.

-Aj

From The Beat: There are have been many death due speeding. It is very dangerous and we are glad that you've realized that. What's happening to you is called, "becoming mature." It's about time! There are other parts of your life that needs a total full attention. We hope you find the time to focus on that.

Shaggy And The Beat

What's up? This is shaggy my topic for today is calling out to all volunteers. I think The Beat Within is good for us. In my opinion, in The Beat Within you get to write how you feel, you can let people know things that you experience, and maybe that person will listen, think about, and compare their lives to others. Then you won't have to experience what that person experienced, like getting locked up for a while.

When I started reading Beat Within, a lot of things went in my mind when I listen to some of them, and I still remember. It's hard when you're doing time and no one will want that The Beat Within moves something and you do the best. That's what I think. Well that's all, alrato.

-Shaggy

From The Beat: You are what make The Beat Within. We are glad that it has helped you and we hope it continues helping you and others who need it. Thank you for believing in The Beat Within, and in you.

When I Get Out

When I get out of the Ranch I have a big responsibility! I have to take care of my a few month old daughter, A'Niara.

She is my motivation to stay out of trouble. I'ma get a job, finish my last year of school, go to a community college and work my way up!

Maybe even a few year college. I'ma get some degrees, so I can make more money 'cause without college degree nowadays you don't get a lot of money just as a high school graduate! But that's when I get out. I got to worry about doing better in here.

-Too Sweet

From The Beat: Good plans! We hope you make them a reality because you got a beautiful girl waiting for daddy. Make it happen - but how?

Thinking

When I am in my room I think about everything I've done.

I done a lot of things that people my age haven't or would be scared to do, but when I think back on what I've done I usually say to my self what the heck was I thinking? I must have been crazy!

What if I got caught or hurt, shhh that's some of the risks you take when you in the game especially when you into deep.

-G

From The Beat: You are thinking hard and deep about your past, and we appreciate you sharing your thoughts with us. The only thing about this piece that we wanted to point out was that you're NOT in too deep. Any time you decide your life is worth more than throwing away on a stupid risk, you can walk away from the game and start over with your life. We hope you do, because you don't deserve to end up a victim of the streets.

A Big Hit In My Life

Hey was cracking Beat! How have you Beat readers been doing? Well as for this vato, I'm doing OK.

The big hit in my life was when I got charged with murder ... I remember my PO telling me about 35 to life, but I only did five months, because I fought my case and beat it. So I got out as an assault defense -- that was the big hit ever on my life.

Now I'm back in these walls, doing time again. I ain't trippin', I'm just doing my time so I can get out and make some money.

Well that's about it for this topic.

-Clanton

From The Beat: What's the use of getting hit like you did if you're not gonna learn from it? You end a piece about almost getting locked up for life with some b.s. line about trucha to homies? We're not trying to hate on you, but WHAT ARE YOU THINKING? You've been given a second chance that a lot of people in jail would lose a leg for, and here you are, back again. Man, need to get out of this vicious cycle because you just might not get so lucky next time around. Peace.

Day Dreaming In My Room

Day dreaming.

Day dreaming is the only thing I do when I'm alone in my room.

What do I day dream about is me being back in Colorado,

me being back with my girlfriend....

I day dream about a lot of things but mostly about my lady.

I love her with all my heart.

I'm always day dreaming about the day I get out because I'm gonna go straight to grub.

I get soooo hungry and crave some fast food, you know.

Shoot, I can't wait.

But anyways, yeah, let me get back to day dreaming about the love of my life.

-S

From The Beat: Do what's right to return to a life you enjoy. Keep us posted!

There's Really Nothing

What's up Beat? There's really nothing that's making me change my life right at this moment. But maybe 'cause nothings hit me that hard to change me. But I do feel bad for what I did and that's exactly why I'm here. I really feel bad but sometimes stuff happens.

It still feels like a nightmare being in here. But just how they say, you do the crime you do the time. The only thing that's making me stop doing the things I did is having a baby. It's still a trip to me but that doesn't mean I'm gonna stop kicking it. It will still be me.

Well, I'll be here till I'm due. So, catch you later.

-Jessica

From The Beat: WE hope you stop kickin' it to the point of putting your freedom or making progress on hold. Remember your baby is your number one responsibility! Don't even give the system a chance to pull you away from the baby you love! Regret is a bummer.

That Would Be Real Good

I think that minors should create a real good letter to major corporations, stating that we need paper and ink for our Beats. When we write these letters to the company's, Office Max, Office Depot and Staples, send in a really good issue of all our best pieces from previous issues. Think that would be real good. Or set up thick magazines and sell, and tell others the cause and purpose of The Beat.

-Genelle

From The Beat: Excellent thoughts! Keep them coming!

The Next Step

What's up? You know this be not just the one and only, but the original. Well, before I had court on the 24th, I got interviewed for APA and I didn't get accepted. So now I'm going to the ranch for 6 to 8. I'm hella mad 'cause I thought I was gonna get released.

At first I thinking of running but then I thought about it, so now I'm just gonna do my tiempo (time). Not just for me, but for my man that I love with all my heart. Hopefully he'll be by my side and stay faithful to me while I'm doing my tiempo (time) in the ranch. But if I do end up running, I'm gonna do whatever I can to stay out with my man and live that Gansta Life to the fullest, but on the "D L" at the same time. But whatever decision I make I'm not gonna regret it.

And on the other hand, if I don't end up running from the peice of crap ranch. I'm just gonna keep it cool and post. I guess try not to get more tiempo (time), or get failed. 'Cause if I do fail I have to do my tiempo (time) all over again and if that happens, I just have to deal with it.

Hopefully I learn my lesson this time, but if not then I guess I'm back to where I started. I just need to focus on what I want and I want to finish my program and get off probation, go to school and be with my man. "The love of my life." But something is telling me to run so I can be with my man. 'Cause honestly, to tell you the truth, I don't think I could do 6 months without my baby. But I'm gonna have to.

Well, wish me luck when I get transferred.

Oh yeah and I've been thinking about if I'm gonna run from the ranch and my decision is...

-Juzette

From The Beat: To stay!! Don't be a fool and run, you'll kick yourself in the behind! Regardless if you have a man by your side or not, life is too short and why be another incarcerated statistic! Be a success!

It still feels like a nightmare being in here.

A Day I'll Always Remember

What it do Beat! This yo' bot Jd from the hall time unit. Today I am going to talk about what happened to me in Pittsburg, CA. Me and my cousin went up there to go to a family reunion at my cousin's house. It took us about three hours to get there and when we finally got there, there was hella people mugging us so we mugged back but keep on driving.

This was my first time going to Pittsburg and I didn't know how they got down. I heard it was a bad city through. When we got to my cousin's house we went to the family reunion from his house.

When we got there everyone was having a good time and my uncle was barbecuing. About 20 minutes into the barbecue, we saw a car leaning in on two wheels. It was like, oh shhh, so we started to walk up to the car and then the car went back on all fours and the person in the back seat start shooting at us. My cousin got hit in the kidneys, and I just hit the floor. My uncle had a .38 and shot back and they drove off. Pittsburg is a crazy city and I don't plan on going back.

-Jd

From The Beat: It's messed up when a happy family barbecue turns into a bloodbath like this. Is the issue Pittsburg itself, or different drama that people at that barbecue were involved with? What happened after your cousin got hit? Was this the first time you got shot at? Did you feel like you should make some changes in your own life?

Carelessness

What's cracken beat? This is my first time writing here because its my first time being locked up. Well today topic is about carelessness.

Unfortunately carelessness is what got me here in the first place. So now I'm in here because I took this gun from someone's house. I knew it was wrong but I wasn't thinking clearly at the time.

I've done a lot of things in my life that I should've regretted but I didn't because I've always learned from my mistakes but I always make new mistakes but never the same one.

Now I think that it's time for me to stop making these careless mistakes. I want to do good but nobody believes me so I guess I just have to keep doing my best and hopes that somebody notices.

Well I'm out Beat I'll catch you timers next time.

-First timer

From The Beat: Action speaks louder than words and in the end those who have doubt in you will see you mean business!

Sorry

I want to say I'm sorry
Don't bother to forgive me
Because, believe me, I've got a heart inside
And it's dying inside
Even though I cry nothing can ease the pain
Nothing can make it go away
I did what I did
Without even thinking twice
I lose a good friend
I lost my advice
Now I can't even roll the dice
If feels like ice
So cold just like talking to yourself
I need your advice
You're so close but it seems like you're so far
This poem is dedicated to you.

-Angie

From The Beat: What will make you happy? What will change the way you feel? What's done is done. How can you turn the negative into a positive? You have the answers friend. Please share!

What Is The Beat Within

Well, every Thursday this guy comes in, Dennis is his name and he talks for a minute and then turns us loose to write. Some of us here in juvenile hall write a crappy piece just so we can receive a Beat Within, but some of us put thought and experience and wisdom on a paper and try to help all of those going through situations alike or similar to those that we may have been through.

For me, when I read The Beat, it gives me time to think and some food for thought because when I got hella shhh on my mind, I hear about other situations that minors are in and realize that the grass isn't always green on the other side. Like I complain about this year and then read James' pieces, 36 years (to life)? It makes me think.

I enjoy getting The Beat Within because it is, if nothing else, something to read so far those of you who take The Beat for granted, enjoy it because they may not be around forever.

-Nick

From The Beat: Remember crappy pieces from this point forward equal no Beat and no published work. We're committed to being here until the wheels fall off, but we do need support too. Everything cost money, so we have to do our part and hustle so we can maintain the momentum we have all come to expect. Sure, a program like ours is very special and it sure as hell can all come tumbling down if the powers that be do not recognize the good product we have been giving for close to twelve years now!

Day Dreaming In My Room

Well, when I'm in my room I daydream about my man, and how much I love him and how it's going to be a while 'till I see him. Well, I love my man a lot. He has always been there for me. I miss him a lot. he's going to the ranch pretty soon. I hope he does his time and don't run, 'cause all he is going to do is mess it up for himself and he is going to end up back in here.

I think about my grandma now. She has always been there for me. And how I regret not being there for her. Her birthday's coming up soon and it sucks 'cause I could have been there for her. And be out with my family, but life is full of regrets. There's really nothing I can do but just wait to go home.

Well Beat, that's all the time I got for now.

-Stephanie

From The Beat: Well we wish you the best, and we hope your man is not selfish and sets himself up to return to juvenile. Take care of yourself and make your family proud!

Stuck In The System

Something that I experienced, is to me, it felt like I was stuck in the system forever and I did lose three years to the system. Straight years!

And for me, I know it's my own fault that I am in the system. I want to change so that I don't take no more time away from my life.

I want to stay out of the system. I want to be home with my mom and family. And for me to follow through with that. I am gonna stay in my unit and get released home on EMP June 2nd, complete my EMP by going to school and not using drugs. Then I'm gonna work my way to get off of probation by doing the same. Then stay home with my family and get a job and live a good life.

Well, got to go. Much love and respect. Thank you Beat.

-S

From The Beat: Three years is a lot of time incarcerated. What have you learned? What will you do differently upon your release? Best on probation! Don't set yourself up and don't allow peer pressure to throw your freedom away!

Money To Write And Read

I say if The Beat Within gets some money. The places they go to is for people come write and read. I say for whomever place you guys go to donate some money so in that order you guys don't have to close down the mighty Beat Within.

Please, people out their volunteer to The Beat it will be helpful.

-Dough Boy

From The Beat: That would be helpful if where ever we went that people would donate to the cause.

Good Times

When I daydream in my room I think of all the good times I had with my lady.

I think of all my homies that I love to be around.

I think of my mom who I love and adore and my brother.

When I'm out, I'm make sure I spend as much time as I can with these people,

for memories of good times,

'cause remember this, tomorrow ain't promised today.

Hopefully this is the last time I write for The Beat

-Lil' G

From The Beat: WE hope you can enjoy all the above with finding your way back to the hall. Is there anything form your past that you must change? Only you know, and by now you are free.

Miracle!

Well the biggest miracle just happened a couple days ago. Remember how last time I said I was going to CYA. Well my PO came to see me and he told me that he was going to give me one more chance and he is recommending three/four months hall time and 90 day's house arrest.

To tell you the truth, I prayed to God the day before my court day, and I think God answered my prayed. I thank God for that one, "good looking out." Well Beat thanks for letting me write.

-Loony

From The Beat: What are you going to do now? God has given you another chance to make something good out of your life? This could be your last chance. We suggest you not to disappoint those who have are giving you a vote of trust. So, tell us what are your plans after those 90 days of house arrest? Can you make them?

Stabbing

Well what's up Beat? It's me Pecas once again in here. Well I just wanted to talk about a stabbing. Well just recently I got stabbed a few times and cheated death. Well I got caught sleeping and one thing that I want to tell all you out there. When you gang banging out there, know who you're rolling with. If you don't know who you rolling with, shhh will happen and they will just let you hang.

I wanted to say thanks Chino, because when I got stabbed he was there and didn't let me go to sleep while I was waiting for the ambulance. Thanks, keep your head up.

When I got stabbed, I was on life support for a few days. They opened me through my belly button to my throat so they could go in and make surgery on my heart, liver, and lung.

-Pecas

From The Beat: Thank God, your friend, and the doctors you're still alive. Life wants you to live a life, but a different life than the one you are living. If it didn't, you would be breathing as you're reading this. This is a sign, and we hope you not to miss it. After what happened to you, we would be thanking everything we have around us. You were just given another opportunity to enjoy the beauty of this world, to be happy.

The Beat Helps

Well I just wanted to say that The Beat really helps me out when I'm in here. When I read the stories of the people that write The Beat, it makes me think and most of things already happened to me. When The Beat writes back, it really helps me out, and it make me think about me and my choices.

-Pecas

From The Beat: Thank you! You also make us feel good! Without writers like you, The Beat wouldn't exist. We also learn a lot from your experience. Keep them coming!

My Hall Thoughts

I be on during these days I sit in here. And that's making it in life. See, I got plans man. I plan on being a top dolla man. Can you dig?

Well hopefully you can because you must be plain stupid to want to live broke as a joke your whole life and be a bum. I mean it's coo' stayin in your hood or where eva da place may be. But who wants to struggle in the process. I know not me.

All I'm gonna say is get yo' paper up and live life happy and to the fullest. Aight' then my folks in the hall keep your heads up and keep it solid.

-Booday

From The Beat: We love to read that you've got a plan - but what is it? If you write it down (we've done this, we know it works), you'll see where that plan is strongest, where it needs more work, how to make it better, how long you should expect to take. Tell us Booday, how are you going to make your dreams come true?

Daydreaming

What up Beat? Well it's our boy Richard from the Max unit once again. Well today's topic is "daydreaming in my room."

Well Beat, I find myself daydreaming in my room a lot lately about the day me, and my homeboy Jamell, and homegirl Angel got locked up. You know Beat, I tripped out on that night, because I was with my lady and Angel.

We were at my homeboy Jamell's pad because we had got kicked out of our pad the week before, because my lady had fought her mom. You know Beat, I wish that my lady would have never fought her mom, because if she hadn't fought her, we would have never had to go to my boy's house! And being at my boy's house was all bad because there was a lot of traffic coming in and out of his house.

You see Beat, just when you think everything is going good, the world crashes under you. I have been out of Juvy for about a year and finished probation.

You know Beat, the night I got locked up, cops told me I was going down for murder and I tripped out when the cops told me that, 'cause of the way they told me was I had a 187 warrant.

I told them that can't be because I never killed anyone, so they took me in and now here I am back here a year later tripping out!

So now I find myself day dreaming in my room about how things would have been if my lady would have never fought her mom!

Well till next time when my pencil meets your paper. Much love and stay up!

-Richard

From The Beat: You made a big progress in finishing probation and staying out. What got you in here again? Are you sure you're innocent? If you are, we hope the truth comes to light, so you can gain back your freedom. Try to stay out of trouble or away from those who can get you into it. Until then keep the writing flowing our way!

The Home Free Dream

Every time I'm in my room I'm daydreaming about the old days chillin' with the homies just posted getting faded and blunted sometimes it seems as if is seems so real, like I'm really there.

Then reality hits and I realize I'm still here. It kills me. But soon when my case comes together I know that some day soon I will be home and realize it's not just a dream. Home free.

Well much love to all in the hall and keep your head up. Gone!

-Joke One

From The Beat: "It kills me." That's a good way of describing it - we felt your pain when we read this. Thing is, the real moment that reality hits will be when you get out - you'll have all sorts of stresses and choices to make. What will you do? Will you go back to your homies and "get faded and blunted?" Will you spend your days with your family? Will you make plans for your future? Are you ready for reality?

You see Beat, just when
you think everything is
going good, the world
crashes under you.

The Daily Struggle

To me this life is a daily struggle.
It's either a jail cell
or living the rest of your life six feet deep.
If you hugging the block
or if you just on the streets
trying to stack ya chips.
Even chasing these honeys
get you caught up
it's a trip
because females get you set up
and it will end up getting your body wet up.
This cat right here got big dreams.
I got money to make,
a couple of juniors to make.
You feel me
I just can't be stuck living this struggle.
Damn this hurt, but I got to keep it moving.
Oh well the only way out is through.

-Filthy

From The Beat: It's good to have big dreams, you deserve the biggest, you deserve all America has to offer. But like you're saying, what you go through on the streets, the fear the stress the betrayals the loss, that's the American nightmare instead. Yes, keep moving. Yes, get through this. But isn't it time to get out of the nightmare? You don't have to live the "daily struggle" do you? Could you get a job? Go to school? Hook up with a positive program? You obviously have the smarts. Would you use them?

We of every race

Down to give up our lives over Ben Franklin's face
Crazed for just a taste to get laced up in the game
Then you say you seeking change but in gangs
It's strange trying to be a 'G

Philly Freestyle

It's that fine ass homeboy who be staying fly 24/7. Well
I ain't got nada to say so I am gonna write a lil freestyle
flow off the top of my head.
So many other people tried
To get on the grind
But ended up dying or doing hard time
Ask why
It don't matter. We of every race
Down to give up our lives over Ben Franklin's face
Crazed for just a taste to get laced up in the game
Then you say you seeking change but in gangs
It's strange trying to be a 'G
Got a wife but secretly you wanna get laid
A trade but be discreet
'C ause you paid Ben Franklin's face to take AIDS so rest
in peace
In these streets we was made to fit in
Making money to fill a swisher sweet,
pipe or syringe...
Ran out of time.

-Philly

From The Beat: Terrific poem - we're sorry you ran out of time too, because we (and our readers) are dying to know how it ends. Will there be any hope at the end of this flow, any chance of escape? Or are the streets just as much a prison as these prisons in the system? We're looking forward to part two of this chilling, marvelous flow. Hopefully you will write us from the county jail, and hopefully your life will get better. You have the skills to be much more than simply another number to corrections

RIP Fallen Soldiers

Chorus

We fall down we lay our crown at the feet of Jesus
The Greatness of mercy and love at the feet of Jesus
RIP my family
RIP my fallen soldiers
I miss y'all

Verse 1

Living in this life is so cold
Can't even have no fun no mo'
I done lost a couple of soldiers
Lost my cousin Mar and my great grandmother
Took his life January 2005
Seems like yesterday he was just alive
Took his life over nothing
Was a working man growing up to be something
My great grandmother was beautiful
I still don't understand why God took her though
Pour some liquor out when I speak on they name
'Cause I know one day I'll see them again
If you don't lost somebody pour some liquor out, light
a candle
If you done lost somebody, pour some liquor out, light
a candle.
I know it hurt go ahead shed those tears look up in the
sky 'cause they angels now

Chorus

We fall down we lay our crown at the feet of Jesus
The Greatness of mercy and love at the feet of Jesus
RIP my family
RIP my fallen soldiers,
I miss y'all

Verse 2

Rip to my cousin he was on the block even when the
ninjas wasn't
Hustling round the clock mane trying to touch a dozen
Tryna make sure his son had a lil' something
If I could wish you back I love you big cousin and you
know that's a fact
I told you from the gate
I'm sorry I didn't go to your funeral
I just couldn't take seeing you in that casket though
So I hit the block and started stacking doe
So your son will have a lil' back up doe
This one for the fallen
Fo' the ones that loss family pour out a lil' liquor
Fo' the 'hood ninjas get them grapes and split them
swishas
RIP to our fallen soljas damn we really miss you.

-Boodah

From The Beat: This is one of the most heartbreaking poem/song is beautiful and heartbreaking. Losing so many people, we admire you for maintaining the ability to turn your pain into song and praise, and so sorry that you've already seen so many funerals in your life. This piece got us thinking though. In any meaningless war, people die. How can we all join together to end the war once and for all. How can we keep our loved ones from falling in the streets. In this poem, with all its grief, you also speak of revenge. But if you do, doesn't that just mean more funerals, more crying mothers? Is that the answer? Tell us, as a poet, as person who has seen so much death: How do we end these wars?

I just can't be stuck living this struggle.
Damn this hurt, but I got to keep it moving.
Oh well the only way out is through.

Addicted To Money

I have a addiction, but just not any drug. I'm addicted to money, 'cause wit'out it, I can't live.

-J-Meeze

From The Beat: When you're addicted to anything, including money, you never can have enough. If you're serious about overcoming your addiction, how will you start?

In Novato

Thirty-six days ago
My homies and I snuck into a middle school
But got kicked out
I stole a bike from the middle school
And I hit a parked car, a van
Just took out the license plate
Then we went to the Grant bus stop
We were drunk and hungry
And went to get some food
We went to Target to get some pizza
Then we was tryna to go to the movie theater
I had five homies with me, includin' me
Then the police rolled up on us
And caught me, and arrested me
Went to juvenile
And I went to court drunk
I got thrown away

-Jayleon

From The Beat: You sound like you think what happened is funny but also that it has messed up your life for now, right? Are you having a hard time deciding whether you want to keep doing typical kid things, like getting drunk and stealing bikes, or whether you want to become a young responsible adult who has to take his life seriously, because here come some real responsibilities? That's a choice all teenagers face.

Thinking Of You

Day dreaming in my room
Wishing I was with you
You got me captivated
I be dreaming all day
X-rated with you
Making love to you
It feels good to have you around
You're my princess
I'll give you the crown
I get so happy when I'm with you
You drive me crazy
I just go round and round
Day dreaming about you
Is how my day goes by
And, baby, I promise I won't lie
'Cause you're my special lady

-Oscar

From The Beat: You're lucky to have such a special lady. But why were you willing to risk being locked up and away from her by doing whatever brought you into juvy? How is she managing out there without you?

I be thinkin' that I should study something,
get a career, and make money and do it legit,
but I have no idea about what I would like to
be and I'm almost out of high school

I Should Change For Good

I be daydreamin' when I'm in my room, about how I got
busted,
thinkin' I should have ran from the cop.
I should have stopped after I got the DWI and how I should
change for good
after I'm out, which is going to be a while.
I be thinkin' that I should study something,
get a career, and make money and do it legit,
but I have no idea about what I would like to be and I'm
almost out of high school,
but life a witch and then you die.

-?

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with not knowing what career you want to follow. Can you ask yourself what you enjoy doing that you might be able to develop into work? What would you like to learn more about, that working at a related job would teach you? What are you good at? Why don't you get a part time job after school and see how it works out? Try different jobs in the next couple of years. See what you like?

A Day Dreaming In My Room

I dream about some girls that I love and I get out of this
miserable place and I was with those girls, kidding,
hugging and touching and playing some games or
watching movies in the living room in the dark and we get
to sleep and after that, I wake up happy.

-Roylan

From The Beat: When you're free again and have a chance to make your dreams come true with your girls, how are you going to keep yourself free? You don't want to just dream your life away. Get out there, stay out there, and make your dreams reality!

No Longer A Boss

Big hit
Click click
All I heard from the gun
Angel on my shoulder
When that ninja tried to lay me out
From the north to east
Boss, 'til I rest in peace
I was raised to wear (one color)
Shoot when I see (another)
Raised to rep
Even if I'm shot dead
I'm done with that bull, though
Young boy don't bang
No homies
No cholos

-Trip

From The Beat: Are you serious that you're through with representing any color, any area, Trip? If being threatened with death affected you so profoundly that you've decided to get out of your gang, then it's all good. What will you do instead with your life when you get out again? Sometimes replacing that entire life can be the greatest challenge. Great luck to you! We're pulling for you.

You Never Know What People Are Capable Of Doing

A big event that happened in my life was losing a friend. I remember that phone call like it was yesterday. We got the phone call around eight in the morning on New Years Day in 2005. We got the phone call from one of his friends that was with him. They were in the city for the night and they got in an altercation. He was stabbed and the lady was let go with self-defense.

This incident has taught me to watch what I say. You never know what people are capable of doing. You will be missed, but never forgotten.

-Tc

From The Beat: Have you, in your imagination, gone through the story of what happened and recreated it as if you'd been there? If you had been, what would have gone down differently? So tell us what went through your head when you heard the news of your friend on the phone? RIP to your homie.

The Picture

If I had one photo to carry with me for the rest of my life, it would show the four people that have been there for me through thick an' thin, through the good an' bad. Those four people are my dad, my brother, my best friend an' my ex-boyfriend. They may not have agreed with all my decisions, but they stood by my side. Those are the faces I want to see for the rest of my life.

Much love an' respect.

-Angel

From The Beat: You owe much to those who have stood by you in good times and in bad. So, how do you intend to give them back what they have already given you?

Finding Nemo

When I was lost in Redwood, I picked my partnas over my family. Until this day, I feel hella bad! I quit going to school and just post. I got booked in with my homegirl and thought everything was going to be coo'. But then my homegirl got released on the 3rd day she was in here.

I went to court. Now I am facing 45 days or girls' camp. Now I've been here for couple weeks. I feel hella homesick, and now thinking about me not going to school, and for not coming home. I just post up with homegirls and the homeboys.

I got a letter from my brother. He was upset that I am following his footsteps. Sorry, brother. It's true, I was. But when I get out, I have my things straight so it's good.

But got court on the 21st. Hope everything goes good.

-Nemo Baby

From The Beat: We hope it goes well for you in court, too. But we want you to understand clearly that it isn't your brother you should be saying "Sorry" to, it's yourself! Your brother is responsible for his own choices (and he should not be surprised that you have made some of the same ones). You are responsible for your own choices and if you make the right ones, as you promise you plan to do, then you won't have to be sorry to anyone for anything.

Happy Birthday To Me

Happy birthday to me

I'm in here and not free

You could have seen your family

You could have seen your friends

But I guess you didn't think

I know you try and try

But who cares

People look at you like you are a freak

You laugh just to help the pain

Maybe if you don't think about life it will

help

You feel like no one wants you

You say you don't care

You have been through almost everything

And that's why you say you don't care

You're strong inside and you're just getting

stronger

You are a Gemini, think twice before you

act

All of this is just the facts

You must stop before it gets out of hand

This is me talking to my insides

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: We strongly believe in the power of addressing yourself, just as you have in this tight poem. If you do this regularly, it becomes a kind of self-fulfilling ritual, a kind of prayer to yourself. As a Gemini, you are of two minds, so keep addressing that "good" side so that it will continue to grow stronger and stronger. Besides the pain you have experienced through the circumstances of your life, you are also experiencing growing pains. And the good thing about growing pains is that it means you are growing! We see that growth in your words. Keep doing it!

I Cry

Do you still remember me because I remember you

You look at me as if I am nothing to you

I cry

I punch inside, but you don't see me cry

My life feels like its all been a lie

I hate doin' time

But I never regret the crime

It's Cinco de Mayo time for me to get paid

My life is a fade

I might have a baby to name

My life is always the same

I don't want fame

Just a little boy to name

He better not bang

He don't need to be in a gang

Lil' Jamaul is gonna be my fame

This isn't a game

This is my life

Lil Jamaul, I love you

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: There are things that worry us about this piece, Lady Taz. For one thing, you claim never to regret "the crime" but only doing the time. Isn't that a prescription for more crime and more time? The other thing that worries us is your faith that having a baby — thought you've given away your freedom — will make everything all right. Babies need and deserve full-time parents, and being a parent means being responsible for guidance, for providing, for love — and most of all, for being there. Are you ready for all that? Think hard before you come up with an answer to that question.

Don't

Don't tell me your ok because I know you're not

I'm gone outta your life doin' my time

Don't tell me you are doing good!

Is that why I got told you were messing around

Don't tell me that you don't care

I know you do

Don't say you're over Dad's murder last year

I'm not even over it

Don't front to me, you know me better than I do

I love you so much

Don't tell me you're not getting in trouble at school

Mom told me about that boy you jumped

Can't you see? Can't you hear? You don't want to be in

here

You the only male I trust, the only one I love

You're my one love, I'm yours

Ever since three years old we haven't had anyone who

cared

You where my super hero — always there

You look up to me. I feel like I failed

You're my one-year younger lil' bro and my twin for eight

days

I love you

I remember when you would jump haters

You also jumped one of my ex's for calling me a name

I remember playing fighting games and we both end up

with bloody lips and stuff

At seven years old

Those were the days in LA

Remember when I was eight and put on mascara and it

got in my eye.?

You thought I was gonna die.

Look, do good. I love you, Lil' Falcon.

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: We're not sure if Lil' Falcon is really your brother or not (we don't understand the reference to being a twin for eight days), but we feel the powerful love in this piece. How much of the advice you lay on Lil' Falcon could, just as easily, be directed at yourself? How do you feel you failed him, and what can you do to make up for that failure?

Not Defeated

Get out of my mind!

Get out of this place!

Get out of my heart!

You're just a waste of space!

What do you think I am, a piece of meat?

Oh no, no, no. I'm not that easy to defeat.

You best step off, before you get stomped on.

One love, one world and I'm gone.

-Lil' Kitty

From The Beat: We admire your strength and determination, but we almost decided not to publish this piece because of the implied threat in your next-to-the-last line. We're not sure who this is aimed at, but whoever it is, it is NOT appropriate for The Beat.

My Daily Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Lord, thank You for keeping me alive. I wanna pray for everyone in here, and I know that there's a reason that I'm still alive. Lord, I know in the past my faith and hope wasn't alive, but after Lil' GM died, You took all my time. I don't know why he had to die. I loved him with all my life. I cried and cried... then got into the gang life.

You know and I know that wasn't right, but I didn't care about my life. God, give me the strength to go in another group home so I can live with my ma and three sisters. Lord, help my brother, Lil' Falcon. He's in the gang life and is not listening to my grandma, Big B.

Lord, on May 24th, it's gonna be my birthday. Please give my family the strength To go on with their daily lives and to know that I'm thinking of them.

Lord, protect my city and all the people fighting in a war. Lord, thank you for everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: Amen, Lady Taz. And happy birthday!

Free At Last

If you are reading this,

I am no longer in this custody

I free to go

A brand new start

Praise the Lord

Praise the Lord

Though I'm heading to a group home

It feels good to be out

Sad to say 6-9 months

And three more of probation

Is the best deal I ever had coming

From the judge.

But, yeah,

Like Martin Luther King said:

"Free at last. Free at last.

Thank God almighty.

Free at last."

-Lil' Duzco

-From The Beat: When you praise the Lord, we hope that means you plan to change a few things in your life so that you're living more according to His plan. That doesn't mean you'll never make another mistake, but it does mean that you will be doing your best to help others, and in doing that, help yourself.

Smile

I wake up and look at everyone and I smile

I smile because there's nothing left for me

I hope that soon I will be free

I cry and love for support, then my homegirls come

I look at the guys with a smile

People look at me crazy

I'm happy in here because it's better than my home

I'm going to a group home, I can't wait to change

I miss my city, but yet I don't

I don't need to be in that drama no more

I'm happy that I'm happy with life

Everyone should be

But I feel like no one is happy in here

I know everyone wants to be free

But time will go faster if you will have fun

So just smile

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: There is something to be said for "just" smiling. Many studies have shown that laughter can be a powerful remedy for what ails you. But beyond the smile, there is a real hunger for change, and that hunger is the beginning of real change. No, you can't "wait to change" because change is not something you decide to do, and it's done. Change is a process that, once begun, leads to paths yet unknown. It is a very sad commentary that you find this place better than your home, but you can take advantage of what is good here for you to make the changes you want to make. If home (and your city) are places for negativity and drama, then you are getting to the age where you can define your own "home" and your own life. Whether you know it or not, you've already begun to do that. Just keep moving forward. Contrary to what you have written, there is still much left for you.

War/Battlefield

It's rainin' bullets and I'm still here
 On this battlefield I can smell fear
 It's simple as this:
 Eyes wide open with clenched fists
 Holdin' up my head
 While around me it's bloodshed
 My heart beat speed, screams of dread
 Feel wind of bullets fly by my head
 They wanna leave me for dead
 Swinging for the sun
 No longer using a gun
 I got this thing called a Bible
 Showin' me and keepin' me in survival
 God is my army
 Staying prepared 'cause the devil's tryna find me
 He wants to blind me
 Still, kill, and destroy me
 Annoy me
 God's prepared me for war
 The Bible is guiding me through the field
 I will not yield
 Even as a weapon it doubles as my shield
 The war has been started
 And the war is far from over
 I'ma king and I will overcome this war
 Thank you Lord.

-King D. Thorn

From The Beat: We find this a very strong and hopeful piece. But we're curious to know when you discovered the strength that you now find in the Bible. Did your discovery only occur after you found yourself here, or did you already know of God's plan for you before you entered behind these walls? If that's the case, what was able to pierce this shield that God has provided you? If God's hand is guiding you now, what changes will that guidance bring about in your behavior (as well as in your character) when you once again are able to make your own decisions? (By the way, we can't put last names in The Beat, so we had to change your Beat name.)

Get Myself Together

I hate always having to end up in Hillcrest. This is now my second time back. Da first time I got out I was very lucky because I did three months for having a fight, and luckily I got out with no probation or anything. Plus, on top, I had the meanest judge. Since I wasn't under the law it gave me a chance to do whatever I want. I got to smoke grapes all day, stay out late, I mean, whatever.

Now this time, out of five months I've been gone, I'm back for a charge of selling dope. Now I'm back in my room again waiting for a court date, and this time I know for a fact I'm going to end up on probation, and I'm not going to be able to do things I'm used to doing, which is a good thing because now that I know I'm under the law, I'm going to get myself together, so when I get off probation I could already have settled down.

Point is to all my readers out there: smoking and going dumb is not always what it is. There is a place and time for everything. . .

-Strawberry

From The Beat: You know, Strawberry, we started to think about your description of getting a break from "the meanest judge". The judge cut you some slack, and you totally took advantage of the "gift," throwing it back in the judge's face. We wonder if that kind of disrespect contributes to the judge's "meanness." What do you think? We know that when we're disrespected, we begin to relate to those who disrespected us in ways that might be described as "mean." Maybe, if you really do get yourself together and "settle down," you'll put a sincere smile back on the judge's face. Not to mention your own!

The Power of Thoughts

The power of thoughts will show you where to go
 And in times of temptation tell you yes or no
 Help you in and out of things, for good and bad
 And show you how to react when you are happy and sad
 They can take you to paradise or just back to your block
 They can make you say stupid shhh, to make you seem like a knock
 They can help you out or hold you back
 They get you to do something you regret and never look back
 So remember to use your thoughts wisely and get the hell out
 And when you get out stay out and come up without doubt

-Reaper

From The Beat: This is good advice. So tell us, how are you using your thoughts wisely?

Like Me For Me

I look at everyone, I don't like to stare
 The guards got us on lock-down like they don't care
 This life isn't fair
 We try and look good for court, but the judges still look down at us
 Everyone thinks I'm gonna run in here
 Where would I go? To the door?
 People look down at me because of my past
 The time sure did go fast
 I ain't that little girl who was fast any more
 And I don't really care about gangs any more
 I'm nice, lovable, and I give if I have,
 But if you look at me you would say, "No way"
 People like to hate just 'cause my size
 I've lost hella weight, but they don't mind
 Is it my size that tells my personality or my mind?
 If you don't like me for me, then you're wastin' my time
 'Cause inside I'm worth more than a dime
 But I guess you don't choose to see what's really inside
 Stop wastin' my time

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: Weight is just one more of those surface observations people make to form their judgments about people. If people want to know who you really are, they should read this fine piece! We are so glad that you've grown away from the fast life and the gang life. Now, give yourself a little time for those who know you only from what's on paper to evaluate your behavior, to learn of those wonderful qualities you describe, and see if their judgments change over time.

I got this thing called a Bible
 Showin' me and keepin' me in survival
 God is my army

Confused

I'm feelin' confused
 You showed me what it felt like to be
 Loved and cared for
 But you also showed me how to hate
 Never fear and never care about things
 I'm feelin' confused
 Together we conquered the true meaning of love
 And together we also conquered what wasn't ours
 I'm feelin' confused
 You told me you wanted the best for me
 And how you wanted me to be successful in life
 But here I am locked up, and for what
 For something I thought was worth fighting for... our love
 But in the end
 I'm feelin' confused
 I now see how I was used, and fell for something so deep
 And something I thought felt true to me...
 I'm no longer confused
 Yes, there were good times, but overall I'm hurt, shocked
 You left me feelin' empty
 So now I'm asking myself
 "Was all it worth what I'm going through now?"
 But I know one thing for sure...
 I'm no longer confused
 I see what I've done, and I see how you did it
 This experience I'll never forget, nor will I forget you
 But I'll always continue to ask myself that same
 question...
 "Was it all worth it?"

-Cha-cha

From The Beat: Although we had to take out the first two lines of this amazing poem (because it seemed to us to incriminate you), we think your confusion is well said, and we understand it. What is "the true meaning of love" if it includes one lover leading the other to crime, and to hurting another person? Is that what love is or should be? Do people who love one another use one another? If, as you say, you're no longer confused, what have you learned from this sad experience that will help you avoid being used in the future?

My Future; My Dream

Well, ever since I got in the juvenile system, I've wanted to be a probation officer. The reason I really want to be a PO is because I know that everyone has two sides. I look at the guys, and they all try to be hard. But I can see that something is wrong.

Everyone has a good side to them, and even a loving side. I look at what all my POs do. I take it in like a sponge, and see what I can do better. I want to listen to what others say and give them the best advice I can. I don't care about the money. I care about the people.

This is my dream.

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: We agree with your assessment of human beings (all of us), that we are complex, and far from one-dimensional. Each of us arrives at where we are in life through a particular path which, while not excusing "bad" behavior, allows us to better understand it. We think you would make a fantastic probation officer. But we also think that you have to build on what you've soaked up by observation by providing a real foundation of education. You have to study, finish high school and go on to college. You have to learn about things like human development, motivational methodology, sociology, psychology... And the list goes on. It is clear that you have the capacity to master all these disciplines, but only if you are disciplined enough to sacrifice some of what you like doing now and put in the necessary effort to reach your goal. We know you can do it, but only you can demonstrate if you will do it. Don't let yourself down.

Consequences Of Curiosity

I started out innocent
Then curiosity killed me
Not all at once - but eventually it did
One of the sad things is the things I love to have
in my life
Screw me over
I hate how temptations run
Why? Because every day they're there to please me
And all they do is bring me down more and more
But I can't help myself from bein' an addict
Drugs are my life
They been my life even before I tried them myself
I understand I can fix all this,
But nowadays I can't motivate myself to do or keep
doin' other things
Without bein' high
High is my motivation, and even if I "fix it"
And move on completely with my life
I'll never be the same. One thing is my smile
You know no one can grow a third set of teeth!

-Val

From The Beat: And no one can regenerate a brain whose living cells are killed by chemicals. And no one can regenerate a life that's lost. You're mistaken when you say that drugs are your life. They are, instead, your death! Of course you can't motivate yourself because you are ill, and when you're ill, you reach out to those who have experience in treating the illness, or you allow it to kill you, little by little, until there is no "you" left to treat. You can BUY a third set of teeth, but you cannot buy a life. That is a gift from your Creator. Take a deep breath, recognize that the future is going to be rough (whether you seek help or not), and get help. It is obvious by what you've written that you are still able to think and to reason and to write. Don't wait until all those gifts are washed down the gutter. Change requires courage. Are you brave enough to take that curiosity that led you down this dark road and let it motivate you to take a leap of faith and climb back out of the hole that only ends in disaster? You can't do it alone. Reach out!

Scared

My life grows old
As the days go by
I look out the window
And ask myself why
Why I never listened
And why I never cared
'Cause now I'm alone in the world
And I'm scared
Scared of the drugs
Scared of the streets
Scared of whatever
Might make me weak
'Cause this violence and hate
Is breaking me down
'Cause I'm losing everyone I love
To the war in my town
I gotta fend for myself
That's what I've learned
I gotta make my life work
With everything I've earned
My life is what I make it
That's plain to see
And I plan to make it
The best I can be

-Angel

From The Beat: There are many reasons to be scared, Angel, and the fact that you are not only reflects the circumstances of your life, but also the maturity you bring to the task of living it. Last week, The Beat made a presentation at a place in San Francisco called the Intersection of the Arts, where we read perhaps a dozen pieces for an audience of more than 100 people. This piece was the very first one read, and set the stage for everything that came afterwards. Thank you. Don't let your fear cripple you from taking those forward steps that will, as you take them, make each new step that much easier to take, farther and farther from fear.

Sorry

Sometimes when I go to my room, I think about the times me, my mom, my sister and my little brother go to the back of the house, sit on the grass and just talk about my dad - about how he is in jail. I remember telling my mom, "Mom, I will never go to jail and leave you. I will never hurt you. I will always be right there."

I cry in the nights because I remember every night she would give me a kiss and tell me, "You are the man of the house," and she would read the Bible. She's a pastor of a church. That what is killing me because people say, "That is your son, Pastor."

But now I said sorry to my mom and to God every day. telling Him, "Please let me out so I can go see my family and go back to church and play the drums." I learned that a little fun isn't worth being in here. I will never come back! And sorry to all the people I hurt.

-Miguel

From The Beat: Miguel, being sorry for the people that you've hurt (which includes yourself) is the beginning of real change. We wish more people (even the President of the United States and those powerful people who never think they owe anyone their apologies) would understand the power of regret, especially when it is sincere and moves you toward a different path. Just remember that prayer works in two directions. Are your ears open to what God is praying to you? By the way, how long have you played the drums? Where did you play? What do you like to play? Do your future plans include playing professionally, or just for fun?

Finding Myself

Every day I sit up in my room wondering why I'm always doing bad things that always get myself in trouble. I wonder to myself when would I ever know when enough is enough, and when I'm going to grow up. But it's so hard, especially not having nobody to look up to or talk to when you're having problems, and feeling low.

But that's not the point 'cause I'm a strong person and know that I'm very independent to have a lot of confidence to work on myself. And now I know that I'm getting older. I have to step up to the plate and be a good role model to my lil' younger siblings, so they won't think what I'm doing is good, and do the things that they see me doing. Because I wouldn't want them to end up where I'm at now...

-Strawberry

From The Beat: It sounds to us that you are maturing, an unpredictable process that happens to each of us in our own way and in our own time (and sometimes never happens at all...). We particularly admire your commitment to your young siblings. One way to keep yourself true to the promise you make in this piece is to ask yourself, whenever temptation comes your way, if you'd like them to see you doing whatever it is you're tempted to do. If the answer is no, don't do it!

Let Me Enjoy Summer

In here it's a day-to-day thing
Waiting to see what every day
brings
They refer to me as a con or a
thief
And I'm still wearin' the last
dude's briefs
I spend most my day in a cell
I think the lack of life is killin'
my brain cells
I can't believe I'ma say this...
I think I miss school
The homies and females
Damn, it seems cool
I wanna enjoy summer
Feel the water in a pool

-Young Kon

From The Beat: We love this piece! Don't let this place kill your brain cells, 'cause it's obvious that you've got them and that you use them! The revelation that you actually miss school is a sign of your growing maturity - and the realization that some things that seem boring or unimportant at the time, actually contribute to a better life only further confirms that you are now a young adult. We hope you get to jump feet first into a summer pool very soon, and let its cooling waters keep you safe from places like this!

JUAN Sometimes we love so much that when it's wrong, we'll even sacrifice being right. Love is a very crucial feeling because this same feeling that cause so much pleasure and joy can also cause so much discomfort and pain. This next writer dedicates a poem of love to his mistress. It's sad because he talks about having a wife and kid at home, yet our masculine hormones tell us it isn't enough to keep us faithful. This is unfortunate for the ones in this vicious circle who are going to get hurt. And from our experience, a lot of times people being hurt is inevitable. He concludes with a great poem about regretting what he's done and redirecting his journey to a destination that's more positive. We highly respect that and can't begin to express how elated we are to hear such things. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. We hope we can continue to be a place of love, however, we wish it wasn't at the expense of others.

Give You A Bow

Why did I do the things that I done,
When I look back now it wasn't even fun.
I miss my family and friends way too much,
Man I wish I could have there touch.
But for now I can't so I'll sit here and wait,
I'm starting to realize if I do drugs then this is my fate.
I'm tired of living my life behind these walls,
All because I have to prove to my homies that yeah I got balls.
Well I'm tired of this shhh I'm ready to change,
And I'm starting to feel that its not out of my range.
So from here on out I'm going to be a different man
And in my head there is a start of a plan.
Will you be a part of it here and now,
If so I send my thanks and give you a bow.

If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don't Want To Be Right

If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right
If being right means being without you
I'd rather live a wrong doing life
Your momma and daddy say it's a shame
It's a down right disgrace
But long as I got you by my side
I don't care what your people say
Your friends tell you its no future
In loving a married man
If I can't see you when I want
I'll see you when I can

If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right
Am I wrong to fall so deeply in love with you,
Knowing I got a wife and two little children depending on me too?
And am I wrong to hunger for the gentleness or your touch,
Knowing I got someone else at home
Who needs me just as much?
And are you wrong to give me your love
To a married man?
And am I wrong to hold on to the best thing I ever had?

If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right
Are you wrong to give your love to a married man?
And am I wrong for trying to hold on to the best thing I ever had?

If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right
If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right

I don't want to be right if it means being without you
I don't want to be right if it means sleeping at night
(Dedicated to Linda Holland)

DEON BOWEN Writing from a facility in Iowa Park, Texas, we give to you a man who doesn't just look at things for what they are on the surface. He sends us three poems and in each one he digs within the depths of his imagination to bring up many real life ideas, beliefs, and ways of expressing them that we enjoy. In his first poem he points out that though, on the surface, two men have very evident differences, when looked at a little closer they are very much the same. He concludes with a poem about the forces that produce intimacy. We're glad to hear what he's had to say and we're sure you will be too...

MIRROR JORAIM

(Collection #80 Destiny)

I look in eyes of two men. As the men with their own eyes look back at each other. While I'm looking at these two men, I can see a sad, angered, lost and lonesome lifeless man.

As the man who I see looks back at the other man I can tell he sees a brave, strong, caring and up lifting spiritual man. I don't understand why? But everything the lost, sad, angered, and lonesome lifeless man do, the brave, strong, caring, and up lifting spiritual man does.

Somehow?
Someway?

This could only be a mistake... Because neither one seems to be disturbed. I'm really not surprised by this 'cause I see these two men go through this on a regular basis. I can only think wonders how they deal with one another. Is one good, or the other bad, or maybe they're both the same?

However I will leave with what I see... Anyone could fit in this frame?

I'm ready to change,
And I'm starting to feel that its not out of my range.
So from here on out I'm going to be a different man
And in my head there is a start of a plan.

Chambers In Chains — Follows Peace

(Collection #81 Destiny)
My cave is cold and dark
And made of death and misery
It's filled with tears both pain and grief
With no love I feel or that lives.

The sick and sorry and unashamed men
Here with me will for surely suffer, they
Cannot recall the last moment to first smile
They seen or had

There is no trees or flowers nor sun
Not even the moon with stars that shine.
Just a deep cold dark cove with barbed wire
And high foreboding death escapes?
Everything shut out all but the doom!

Yet through all this I am happy
Tombed within this hell
For mighty acts of God I see
Through cold bars of my cell of misery.

Intimate Forces

Between a rose thorn and my hand.
Only I can hold it.
Only I now have choices over this rose that lays in my hands.
Only I can bleed from the thorns that penetrate the palm of my hands. Only I have control to let go of this rose
But as my mind joins these forces together,
The life of the rose with its thorns and my hand "I know I know"
That this rose and its thorns along with its looks and its scent
Could cause many to sin but between the rose's thorns
And my hand the thorns is its gates and the hand is its keeper
Which means these forces could never let go!

For The Young Ones

I feel your pain deeply, look young one, regardless of what you have done or how long you have or will be in lock up, you're not a failure unless failure is what you accept for yourself. In fact;

It's impossible to be a failure. If you see your time well, you would see the light that shines above your head, "Look!" you got a second chance to start your life over, not too many people have that chance like you do, "Homie!"

All that back and forth to the hall ain't cool or cute, you making a long journey for yourself. "I know how it is," I'm a twenty one year old. I started doing bad at age ten, I didn't want to do nothing right. Only roll with the set and hurt my familia, never did I have time to think about what I was doing. My mind was millions of miles away.

Now I'm here doing some hard time, I did five years all together, now that you are in the hall, think about the people who love you, think about do you really want to get lost in the system, you have a lot of time to think, homie, once you enter the "inner world" there no more months, its years after years in here.

It took seventeen years to understand what I did wrong. Only if I would've listened to my familia. When I was in your shoes, I wouldn't be here, in this maximum state prison in Florida.

You got to put a new chapter in your life, you can't keep doing the same ol' thang in life, open your eyes up, you only live life once, I seen too many people fall deep in the streets, the game ain't loyal at all, my homies and some of my familia lost their life in the streets and in prison. The game will eat you alive.

See game some times comes openly, always pay close

MARK LEIJA Wow... what an outstanding piece to write for the young ones! We say it week in and week out, but we can't seem to get across the one of a kind Beat Within fact that speaking from experience is the best way to teach. And although an incarcerated experience is a very awful one to go through, when you are able to express it like this next writer, it is extremely powerful. He hits us with a bomb we almost can't handle. He keeps it all the way real by saying that you young ones aren't failures. In fact, most of you will give yourself a second chance and when you give yourselves that chance, you'll understand that you already have been through the worst, so there shouldn't be any obstacle you can't overcome following your release. He's writing from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida. We really enjoyed everything he had to say, so thank you...

attention to everything and every body, so you won't be slipping when game comes your way, to understand the true essence of our present adversities is to "stop dealing, spending so much time on attitudes" and start perfecting our attitude, see the only way to do that is to always keep your mental circumstance clear so you can articulate your ideas without any static, everyday you "must" build positive energy, so your plans accelerate into success and your choices be right and exact and bring about ease, you must keep your third eye open so you can study fictitious brothers and homies, amongst you putting up a mirage when problems come up.

But at the same time, you got to discipline yourself so you can achieve your objective, see at all times your words most erupt concepts that whomever come in contact with you, that's how you survive in here and out there, you must be able to foresee everything. Starts in the mind and then is manifested in the physical form, take moral inventory of your self daily from the neck up. So you start living your ideas remember our mind is unlimited and bound by nothing.

MANUEL

Though this next writer is in The Beat Without section (meaning 'without' workshops), he's still a young person. As a matter of fact, he's incarcerated in the biggest juvenile hall in this country — Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles, CA. In his letter he expresses how much he appreciates the work we do and how at first he was a little reluctant to send us his stuff because he didn't know the process. Well, we're glad he finally decided to send us his work because it's excellent and we appreciate him just as much, if not more, than he does us. He writes about the deadliest weapon known to man and we agree. Otherwise, we wouldn't be doing this work in the first place. And then he concludes with a poem dedicated to his mother on Mother's Day, which passed last month. We apologize for the delay in publishing this, but hopefully you can still relay it to your mother, so she can see, as we have, your undying love for her. Thank you for such a kind letter. Happy belated Mother's Day...

I seen too many people fall deep in the streets, the game ain't loyal at all, my homies and some of my familia lost their life in the streets and in prison. The game will eat you alive.

Deadly Weapon

In my hand
I hold the most dangerous weapon known to man.
It is a pen...

More dangerous than a gun or a knife,
This weapon has the power to take away a life.
So far this weapon has been used against me.
It may not seem so dangerous to you but it is to me.
Because it is the only thing that can set me free...

Happy Mother's Day

Dedicated to A.G.

When everyone gave up on me
You where the one that pushed me
When I thought I couldn't do it
You said I could if I put my mind to it
When no one seemed to care
You were always there
You were my biggest supporter
You make me feel like I could anything even walk on water
When I lost my way you put me on the right one
You said no don't go that way come this way son
And I love you for that
Because you always had my back even when I wanted to quit
You said, "No, forget that!"
You said you better do what you gotta do and make it through school
Because you didn't raise no fool
You told me that I could rule the world and everything in it
You told me to shoot for the stars because the sky is the limit
Mom I love you with all of my heart and soul
I want you to be proud of me that's going to be my biggest goal
I know even though I'm in this place
Every time you see me you have a smile on your face
I promise to never disappoint you
Because I think it would hurt me more than it would hurt you
So I promise to do good
I promise to never go back to the hood
You know que te amo con todo mi corazan
Mom in my heart you'll always be #1

FRED SMITH As a country we love dealing with problems elsewhere before dealing with problems at home. So when people who genuinely 'care' step up to the plate, we're listening attentively in hopes that someone can offer ideas on what would make things better. This next veteran Beat writer has a great idea to share with us and that's to start with ourselves. In his poem, which is a brilliant one by the way, he lists many ills of our society that people need healing from, and then he offers his solution in the end. It's really a 'must-read' poem and after we read it we were blown away. He's writing from a California State Prison in Susanville, CA. He's always been a major contributor for The Beat and although we haven't heard from him in a while, the thoughts and emotions that come along with his poem are why he will always have a place in our pages. Thank you for such compassionate words...

I Care

I know life is a struggle
You say that you won't put on us what we can't bear
I know it's your plan but sometimes we don't understand
The things you do Lord it seems like nobody care.
I've seen the effects of drive by shootings,
L-A riots and the looting
Green house gases and the air that they're polluting
Troop numbers they keep boosting America idea for a
resolution
Is to place their own in their government control 'um like
puppets
And watch every dollar they spend while Katrina victims
Are still homeless broke with nowhere to go.
Insurance Company loopholes don't want to pay to rebuild
their homes One of the worst responses in this nation's
history
But let another country have an earthquake
And we're there with God speed

Just another attack on poor and the blacks
That's breaking their backs
This is beyond racism this is how the devil acts
Ghetto's crumbling slumlords raise the rent and horde
Can't get the leak fix or proper heating but they steady
want more Homeless people in the thousand in the city I
live
A lot of them help defend this country and make it safe for
our kids
So why are the shelters being closed
And the food program low
The richest nation on this Earth but to get it we sold our
soul.
Cause when a state main revenue is to house you in blues
California the police state their color shines true
Over crowded, trip bunks violating my rights
House me in a gym with my enemies and get hazard pay for
the fight After school programs shut down keep the cycle
going round
So his idol is that D-boy that's pushing them pounds
Kids out of control mind, body and soul
Music feeding that garbage to keep their pockets on swell'
Parents losing the fight on how to raise their kids right
They learn by watching T.V. and video games — the things
they like Most of the dads are gone
In jail for o' so long
Black families being destroyed since them slavery songs
I know it starts with me — got to get it right and give both
hands
And be a man
Help my people cross this desert sand
(Cause I care)

GARY WIPPERMAN We believe faith does have a lot to with whether one can survive in jail or not, but there are other variables also. Sometimes people with the strongest faith can also be broken by the deprivation of the system. This next writer talks about the importance of faith while incarcerated. It's obviously an important factor to this man's survival and hopefully after reading this piece you'll learn some ideas that may help you survive such an emotionally draining experience. He's writing from the Oakwood Correctional Facility in Lima, Ohio. We don't have to say we hope because we know he's keeping the 'faith'.

Faith

The only thing a man has in jail to keep him strong is
faith.
The only thing to prevent him from getting down on
himself is faith. The only thing that he may be able to
face in the morning is faith.
The only thing to keep him going when times are tough
is faith.
With faith in himself,
In God and the people that he loves he can overcome
anything.
Without faith, love, patience, and hope, a man in jail is
nothing.

HERSHEY Writing from the Monroe Detention Facility in Woodland, CA, we give you a man who, we're assuming from reading his poem, is giving us some advice from experience about balancing our good side and our evil side. He says that though his evil side has prevailed (we find that hard to believe), we don't have to let our evil sides do the same. It's a shame that he feels like his evil side is victorious, but there's hope in the end as he asks his Father for forgiveness instead of slapping his positive side for not being strong enough to stand up against the other side. We appreciate the lesson he's relayed and hope to get more from him in the near future.

Ying Yang

To all who read The Beat Within,
May we escape the claws of evil sin,
May we begin again and disprove them,
And show we live with a heart that can't wear thin.
May our better halves win over its evil twin,
And may our experiences help others who haven't been,
To our depths of hell and back again.
See I've been to hell and I'm back again.
'Cause my better half lost to its evil twin,
And now I feel like slapping him.
Instead, I look to our Father and pray
Asking him for a chance and forgiveness
Of which I can't comprehend.
And now I'll end
'Cause my heart's flow stopped whispering.

J.F KURTZ Nothing is impossible as far as The Beat Within is concerned — even loving you isn't impossible. In fact, we love you for asking such a brilliant question, "Is it impossible to love me?" It's brilliant because it's the perfect beginning to self-exploration. A lot of times we must love our selves before any one else can love us. We must attract others by being happy with who we are, with or without other people. We hope you'll find out that nothing is impossible — especially finding love. What do you think?

Impossible To Love

Am I that impossible to love that I have no one, everyone
seems to have disappeared even my mom and I'm her son.
Am I that impossible to love for the things I have done,
For I have only done what I was taught to do.
Am I that impossible to love that I can't even smile,
There seems to be people looking over my shoulder to
hate once in awhile
Am I that impossible to love that females continuously come and go, with all the charm and pretty
boys look I have nothing to show.
Am I that impossible to love that in general people don't stay around, I've searched deep but the
qualities I lack I've not have found
Am I that impossible to love that maybe I don't love myself,
For family, friends, and society have all cast me away like an old book on an old shelf.

What's Wrong With My People

What's up with my people? This mainly goes out to those who are or have been in the California Prison System, but I know it can reach farther than that to my people out there in the streets in every hood and ghetto.

Norteños and Sureños are the same! They're Mexican, some were born in Mexico and some born in California or other states to which most of us refer to ourselves as Mexicanos or chicanos. There are other races that are in these Mexican Gangs, African Americans, Whites, Asian etc. But the majority is Mexicans or people of some Latin descent.

What's the difference between a Sureño (Southsider) and Norteño (Nortsider)? Except a number and a color? Nothing! We're simply ignorant and crazy. We had no choice of where and when we were to be born or what neighborhood we were to grow up in.

Most real Southerners (Sureños) are from Southern California and are all from different gangs that do not get along on the streets and we know they stab, shoot and kill each other daily, but once they get to the California Prison System. These guys from these same gangs that they don't get along with, are bunkies, homies and run together. Now that's crazy! Somebody who killed your brother and friend you grew up with, your sister, or someone close to you is now your celly in prison, and now he's your friend or you play the part. Knowing that if you were on the streets he would try to kill you and you would try to do the same to him. But you guys are afraid to do anything to each other because you're afraid of the "consequences" from the rest of the Southerners (Sureños).

But now you guys run together and your enemies are the Norteños (nortsidiers) who are Mexicans or Chicanos from Northern California. Most Southerners have never ever seen a Norteño before unless they've been to Northern California or have family in Northern California which a lot of Southerners do. A lot of Norteños and Sureños are family. That's real! I've seen it here in prison a Southsider meeting his dad who is a Paisa and has a life sentence for the 1st time. Brothers on the same yard that are on opposite sides one a Norteño the other a Sureño. I've seen Sureños whose cousins that are on the same prison yard and are Norteños. Some act like they don't know each other and when nobody is looking sneak in a few conversations, 'cause they're afraid of what the rest of their gang will think or prison politics. I knew a lot of people, Sureños whose brothers, sisters, dads, moms, even grandma's and grandpa's in some case are Norteños and vice versa.

So why are the Norteños and Sureños separated in the California Prison System? Is it because of the old story all the O.G.'s tell us about a Mexican from Southern California taking a Mexican from Northern California's shoes? Is that why everyone's separated? Who knows why the Bulldogs broke off from the Norteños? Maybe 'cause they got more rules then CDC? What is even crazier and doesn't make sense is if a Norteño and Sureño go to Federal Prison or to another state Prison such as Texas, Arizona they'll run together, they'll be bunkies and have each other's back. So why not in the California Prison System? Why not the streets? The Sureños, Norteños, Bulldogs, Border Brothers, Paisa, or any other Mexican (Latino) are all the same and are related to each other some how or some way.

Another question to ask yourself and think about. Why would we listen to someone a shot caller who's in prison just like us, for messing up, tell us what to do? On the streets if that shot caller told us what to do most of us if not all would give him a little bit more than a piece of our own mind! If we wouldn't listen to him on the streets why would we listen to him in prison? The shot caller ain't no different then us, he ain't no specialer than us. So what if he knows somebody that knows somebody, or he's been touched. Who cares! Are you gonna let someone else dictate your life?

Most Norteños don't kill each other but some do, most of them have never seen Sureños in their cities or neighborhoods until within the past 10 or 15 years Sureño gangs are sprouting up in every part of Northern California are growing strong.

I'm just saying, what's already on a lot of people's minds. This is crazy. A lot of us got family from both sides or all sides. Are you willing to kill even your own family member over a color, red or blue? Or over a number, 13 or 14? Or over a street or neighborhood that's not even yours.

We need to be real. Speak and act out what we believe, stop being afraid of not going with the flow or going against the grain. Stand up for what you believe in, be a real man. People only have as much power as you give them and you can take that power back! A lot of you have made commitments to your neighborhood/

SIR WISDOM We welcome Sir Wisdom to our pages this week. He is the man we have been waiting for to shed light on a very serious topic. Sir Wisdom courageously stands up and offers a different perspective than a gangsta's view. He's mainly talking about Latino gangs such as the north and south. These gangs have been around for quite some time now and we're sure that when members of these gangs read this, they'll be clenching their fists, tightening their jaws, and probably will even get rid of this particular issue when they're done. However, just as we respect their opinion, we respect Sir Wisdom's writing. He's writing from a California State Prison. His message is a very bold and powerful one. The title in itself is a great question to ask, 'What's Wrong With My People?' When are we going to stop killing each other off and setting ourselves up for failure for a cause most couldn't tell you about? How did all of this start? And why are we continuing to perpetuate the extinction of our people? The piece is powerful, a must read...

gang when you were young to bang 'till your casket drops. But most if not all did not know the commitment you were making at that time. You did not know what you were really getting into. And now you've been through the system and seen how twisted this all really is. But now you feel like you're stuck in the game and you don't want to continue living life like this. You got kids, a wife now, you don't want your kids to grow up without a father because you're dead or in prison for life, you don't want your kids to grow up in the streets and get into a gang and make the same mistakes you made. It's all right to change, and it's time to change, you got to decide what's best for yourself and your loved ones. Prison shouldn't be this place where you're stuck between a rock and a hard place. It shouldn't be a place where you look at your life and decide I'm done living that fast life. A place where you change for the better in all aspects you can change not only yourself but everyone around you. You have great potential that you don't even know you have. There's a lot of people that you influence and that look up to you that you don't even know. You're a leader and don't even know it.

There's more of us that believe what I'm saying. Then the guys who think prison life, prison gangs, and cars are cool. We can turn the tide, we can change this whole system from the gangs in here to the gangs on the streets we can make a difference and make a better world for ourselves and everybody else. I told you, you're a leader. Some people won't step out till they see you do it, they will remain in their chains of fear and whatever else binds them to go with the flow. Till you step out and dare to be different, others will step out too and be by your side because of your example. They're waiting for you quietly. So they can make their stand too. What are you gonna do?

The main reason I write this is to cause my people to think. This is not to unite us as "Raza" or some racist tract, but it's to let you know the devil is using you guys to kill each other. Killing your own people for nothing — senseless murders. Mothers, fathers, children, girlfriends, and so forth are grieving over the deaths of their sons, daughters friends, primos, boyfriends, dads.

Just the other day as I was watching the Salinas news a 25year old man was walking with his 10 year old son down a street when a gang member shot and killed the 25 year old man in front of his 10 year old son. That's sad! There's millions of more stories like that or even worse going on in the streets of California when are we gonna stop being like this and grow up?

The only person that can really bring us all together (no matter what gang or race you're from) is the peace and salvation that God offers us through his son Jesus Christ. Who died on the cross in our place for our sins. If we will believe that and repent of all our wicked ways and turn to God with all our hearts. He will save us, forgive us, change us, take our broken lives and relationships and put them back together for his glory and then you'll have peace with God, peace with your fellow man/woman and a peace inside your heart that surpasses all understanding.

If you want to know more about the peace that God offers you read the "bible" for yourself! There I've done my part to the best of my ability of what I've been trying to put on paper for years, it may not be the clearest. But who knows maybe I was meant to write this for only you and you better be able to explain all this better and clearer to others. Maybe 'cause I've done this you can do your job now. Who knows maybe you'll reach a thousand people, and the people you reached will reach three million more for Jesus Christ. We all have our part to do and now you have yours.

You have a voice use it, don't be afraid to go against the grain of our time, talk to your celly's, talk to your little homies from your neighborhood, speak up, write it down, you never know who you'll reach. Help others to find Jesus and fulfill your calling. You're in my prayers! Remember you're the only person that certain people will listen to: It's time to speak up and expose the lies of the devil about gang life!

CECIL WEST We love receiving writing from Cecil because he's raw and uncut with the message he's getting across. That message is mainly to the young folks, but really no one is exempt. He's basically saying reconsider what you're doing before it's too late. And although many people have said this, we can never get enough of it because it's so true. This week, Cecil sends us three poems from the Columbia Correctional Institution in Lake City, Florida. All three are equally powerful with virtually the same message. The second poem, "Another Sad Song," lets us know that Cecil has been through a whole lot. It pains our heart to witness someone with so much compassion for the younger generation, even though when he was younger didn't get that same compassion. For all you youngsters out there that may let this go over your head, it would be wise to at least rise on this one and take everything in. What can we say? These next three pieces are works of art from a very brilliant man...

Another sad song of how I was left alone
Living in this cold world without my moma.
Never knew my father, which some call dad
It's just something, I've never had.

Living In The Fast Lane

Living in the Fast Lane popping pills shooting heroin,
and cocaine. Indulging in wild sex for hours on the
ecstasy,
Selling all kinds of drugs
Living the life of a street thug.
Selling yourself as well as others
Not giving a damn about skin color!
You've grown accustomed to living on the edge
And won't stop until you're dead!
In and Out of jails...
Until you find yourself in a prison cell.
You won't stop there
You can get drugs anywhere.
Even the C-O's are corrupted by greed
They'll bring you cocaine, pills and even weed.
If the money is right they'll turn their back to bloody
fights.
It's the life you live when living in the fast lane
Gangstas don't live long cause someone will soon blow
out their brains!
Or stick a knife or shunt into their hearts
First thing outta their mouth is oh my God.
Most blacks are raised in the hood where only the
strong survive
Resulting to violence at a very young age to stay alive!
Gangstas, Pimps, Players and drug dealers teach their
kids the
Game
And they get caught up in the fast lane.
Having sex at a very young age
When they catch AID's their only chapter to another
page.
This is reality which some call fate
In the hood the Corruption is hard to escape!
Many are addicted to drugs, money or material things
This is reality and not a dream.
The politician's don't care
And don't give a damned about the word fair!
All your brothers and sisters who's living in the fast
lane
Get out too many are disrespecting the game!
It's only leading to death or institutions
When you're gone someone will miss you
But they can't bring you back
The lyrics that I spit is nothing but the facts!
Use your brains....
And stop LIVING IN THE FAST LANE!

Another Sad Song

Another sad song of how I was left alone
Living in this cold world without my moma.
Never knew my father, which some call dad
It's just something, I've never had.

Day in and day out I watch my grandmother struggle to
make ends meet...
Knowing she had four mouths to feed,
Working as a maid for minimum wage
Back when African-Americans was still fighting slavery.
Soon my grandfather died...
Many night's I've watched tears pour from my
grandmother's eyes. Praying to our lord and savior
That us kids would see better day's.
Grew up on government cheese and honey
'Cause we was always short on money,
Sugar water became our favorite
Cause we couldn't afford Kool-aid.
Was discriminated against because of my skin color...
Not to mention I didn't have a biological father or mother

Another sad song of how I was left alone
Living in this cold world without my moma.
Never knew my father, which some call dad
It's just something, I've never had.

Left home at a very young age
With visions of the pain on my grandmother's face,
Making a promise to be the best that I can
At the age of thirteen I was a full grown man.
Doing what I must to survive
At times it was a struggle for me to stay alive,
Been in and out of detention centers, and jails
Soon to find myself in a prison cell.
The judicial system was bias back in the days
It's what you'd call modern day slavery.
Powerful men introduced their deadly drugs
Causing brothers and sisters to live as street thugs,
Striking out at one another...
For that almighty dollar.
Politicians scream they understand
Only if you're a black man

Another sad song of how I was left alone
Living in this cold world without my moma.
Never knew my father, which some call dad...
It's just something, I've never had.

In nineteen, eighty-seven my biological mother was
dying...
As I sat by her bed in the hospital crying,
Holding her hand
Telling her that I understand.
And love her with all my heart
As silent tears ran from my eyes,
Craving to hear her say she loved her only son
Before long she was gone.
Cancer took her away
Right before my face,
She never spoke those three words
Before she died, she knew of my love

Another sad song of how I was left alone
Living in this cold world without my moma.
Never knew my father, which some call dad
It's just something, I've never had.

My Brothers And Sisters

My brothers and sisters I'm a hustling thug...
 Been living a life of violence and blood shed.
 So listen to these lyrics that I spit...
 I'm writing this epic poem for black history
 Gonna take you back to nineteen sixty-three...
 That great march led by Dr. Martin Luther King.
 We all know he had a dream...
 Freedom for all black men and women.
 Facing danger with non-violence...
 The white man treated that great march as a riot.
 Using Billy clubs and dogs...
 Killing and leaving terrible scars...
 Yet that movement didn't stop.
 We was freed from the hand of the white man...
 So he decided to use his heroin and cocaine
 Supplying large quantities to black men and women...
 Bringing and end to a new beginning.
 I'll tell you why, so listen good...
 Look at all the violence and corruption in the hood.
 Kids having babies when they're only babies themselves...
 Having to be raised on welfare.
 Most times by their grandmothers...
 Who's already struggling.
 Kids are not dumb by far...
 In fact they're pretty smart.
 In the hood, most are raised by drug dealers, killers, and
 gang-bangers...
 We all know it ain't gonna change.
 As our kids go to and from school
 They see the dealers on our street corners with fat bank
 rolls...expensive clothes
 and mouths full of gold.
 These hustling thugs are their role models...
 Can't wait 'til they're old enough to stop school,
 And stack quick dollars,
 Young girls become whores at a very young age...
 Caught up in the game for drugs, money, and material
 things,
 Every time a young brother kills another young brother
 They're hindering the growth of black society...
 Leaving family and loved ones crying.
 One goes to the grave... and the other to a cage...
 Then neither one of them can make babies.
 We all know in most cases its cause of drugs...
 So my brothers and sisters stop and ask yourselves,
 where is the love?
 Nobody puts a gun to your head and make you sell heroin
 or cocaine...
 Knowing there's a strong possibility you'll end up in the
 chain-gang...
 or someone blowing out your brains.

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

The hood is also located behind these prison gates...
 Just look around at all the familiar faces.
 And you'll see the truth in my words...
 Most of us was raised as hustling thugs
 What good was that great march
 In nineteen sixty-three...
 Remember some great leaders died for you and me
 Opening many important doors
 Many of us continue to close them
 Education is a very important tool
 Take advantage of your situation and go to school
 Cause we're keeping ourselves in bondage and we're to
 blame
 This day and time we have the same
 Opportunities as the white man
 So stop pointing the finger at everybody else
 When you should be pointing it at yourself.
 Let's start thinking about our kids
 And not let them suffer cause of the lifestyles we live
 My brothers and sisters the department of corrections
 Do not rehabilitate you
 It's something we must do as individuals
 The system is designed to keep you in
 So we must start making changes within
 We gotta be strong my brothers and sisters
 Cause somebody out there truly miss you.
 They took all the sex magazines and replaced them with
 female staff
 With their pants pulled up in their crouches
 Knowing it will stir desire.
 Smelling all sweet causing the inmates to masturbate
 Then they'll throw you in a cage and spray mace in your
 face
 Taking all your gain-time after that
 Knowing it will take months for you to get it back.
 So you got a choice, your freedom or getting off
 Sitting in confinement with all your gain-time lost
 Men will always desire women
 It was meant to be from the beginning
 But we gotta be strong
 If you truly wanna go home
 Incarceration is nothing less than modern day slavery
 My brothers and sisters there's a better way
 We must come together and follow our dreams
 And stand together as a team
 Hispanic, Black, and White
 Cause we're facing an ongoing fight
 Hate and violence is no the answer
 Let's think of our kids and become champions
 We can't stop fate, but we can stop hating

STEVEN This next writer sent us a clipping of his first Beat Without piece along with this next piece, "My Life Using Drugs And Alcohol." In this next piece he brings up something we're almost sure everyone can at least attempt to relate to. Especially since, according to him, a whole lot of people were under the influence of something when they committed their crime. He writes about his life using drugs and alcohol this week. He also speaks a lot about drinking and driving and the statistics that come along with it. They are some jaw-dropping statistics and put things in perspective as far as drinking and driving goes. He's writing from a California State Prison in Lancaster, CA. We're glad he received a Beat Within with him in it. We're sure he was glad too.

My Life Using Drugs And Alcohol

I started off my life using drugs and alcohol. I did not realize that I was harming and damaging the people I love, but mostly harming and damaging myself. By me using and drinking it kept me from learning how to read, write, and spell. I know you learn these things in preschool and elementary school, but I never went to preschool. I started off in elementary school. I dropped out of school in the sixth grade. That's when I really started smoking and drinking. The things I did to get high and drunk were stupid; robbing, stealing and talking people out of

their money.

I'm in the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation now for burglary; sentenced to 25-years all because I wanted to get high, I leave behind two boys who I love very deeply; I didn't believe alcohol and drugs could ruin people's lives in so many different ways. So many people die from drinking and driving. In 2004, 42,518 fatal accidents were caused by drunk driving and over 4,000 of those where in California; which averages to an alcohol-related death every 31 minutes, and drinking was responsible for 21 percent of all deaths of children under 15 in car crashes.

I talk to a lot of people in here and everybody I speak to tells me they were high or drunk when they caught their case. I got 25-years all because I wanted to get high.

Source www.alcoholaler-statics.html



SIR TURTLE We haven't heard from this veteran writer for quite some time now, so it's great that he's written us something again. True to form, he keeps up with the reputation of being a man with a heart for the ladies. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Like LL Cool J, he writes raps that are romantic and we're sure any girl that reads this will instantly fall in love with Sir Turtle. It's crazy how many pieces we get expressing love to others, but how much love do we show each other when we're on the streets. A lot of times we get locked up and are isolated from everything we know. So our human desires are intensified because we haven't had them properly relieved while incarcerated. Though his raps are sweet, we hope they aren't a reflection of his loins rather than a reflection of his heart.

Baby Chinita

Chorus 2x's
Hey baby chinita, you look so mighty fine,
But let me tell you that you're always on my mind.
All I want to know baby is that will you will be mine,
And I'll love you every day of my life and over the years in time!

Verse 1
It's that year two thousand eleven,
I still can't believe that a beautiful angel like yourself has fallen from the sky they call heaven.
Baby chinita, only my heart belongs to you,
Because only you mi amor (my love) can keep me from the blues.
If only this world could really understand,
That I want you as my woman and that I will be your man.
Baby girl when you come into work I see they way you sway your sexy little hips,
Wishing I could kiss you on your beautiful delicious lips.
I knew at that moment you were my lovely sun that will always shine and me your stars that will sparkle at night cause you will always be my lovely sun deep inside.
You really got me under your hypnotizing spell,
Because I know cupid must have shot me with a love arrow for the way that I feel for you that is so real.

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 2
Mi Amor (my love), if I could hold you in my arms I'll never let you go,
Because with you I'll know that we can really run this love show.
In my dreams I hear you calling out to me,
Cause it was love at first sight that I can plainly see.
Look at all the joy and happiness that you bring into my life
I could of have asked for a beautiful woman like you to by my lovely wife.
As I reach out to you in my sleep I awake with a start,
Because by the turmoil of emotions deep, deep within my heart.
I wish that you would let me into your lovely heart with all my might as I think of you all night I know that things will be alright. If I could begin to really tell you how much I really love you, but I know it's so hard for me when I cant hold you in my arms to tell you that my feelings are so true.

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 3
I wish that you would let me know how can I come up to you and whisper in your ear,
To tell you all the wonderful things that you'll like to hear.
Baby chinita, its like that oldie song called "Take A Chance On Me" because if you really look inside your loving caring, kind heart you'll see that were meant to be.
You're a beautiful woman I can't simply resist and I have to have you, but I'll be guilty to the fourth degree, and if I went before the jury in court they will find me guilty see.
I'm wishing that I could really get closer to you,
But even if I had the chance it wouldn't be something that easy to do.
Baby chinita, will you be my little woman?

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 4
Many people don't really understand what I see in you in this place that I live in,
Because all I know is that people are taught that beauty is only on the outside and not what is within.
My baby chinita, will there ever be one day in this life that I will be worthy of your beautiful love,
A love that will shine brightly like the stars from up above.
When that time comes real soon,
I will know that you will cast that sexy glow like that brilliant full moon.
How did a little woman like yourself ever get so damn sexy and so fine,
And is there any way in this lifetime that I can really make you mine?
Baby chinita, can't you see why I'm so attracted to you,
Its because of everything that you do is completely true?

Mayan Queen

Chorus 2x's
Are you that beautiful Mayan queen that I've been searching for?
That's sweet and sexy as you swing your little hips as you glide across the floor?
Tell me that I don't have to search no more cause you're my queen,
And you'll let me be your Yaqui King!

Verse 1
Baby girl, the first time I saw your lovely face,
You put my mind and heart at a slow rest with the blessing of grace.
As I walk past you I inhale your essence,
So I can remember your sweet lovely presence.
I'm so lost in this lovely fantasy where it's all an illusion,
Cause so many people say so much things about you that it makes my mind go into complete confusion.
I still can't believe that I'm lost in a big world like this that's full of so much love,
But now that I've found a Mayan Queen like you that has a heart of love and is it true that your also gifted from up above.

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 2
Its like a beautiful smile like yours that penetrates the very soul of my heart,
And also your personalities that you have caught me totally by surprise at the start.
When I look at you all is see is nothing but pure sexy beauty,
So can you stop for a minute and look at me and finally see some reality.
You're like a Mayan queen sitting on a real high throne,
And I'm like the Yaqui king that wants to take you home.
I can try and seduce you with words of love as these sensual words flow,
Cause by looking at your shapely body has me dreaming of you in the most sensual manner as I run this show.
My Mayan queen, your beautiful brown eyes are surrounded by eyebrows so elegant cause you have me in a trance because I believe I see innocence that by us meeting must have been heaven sent.

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 3
You're like a queen no other woman can measure up to,
Because you're one of a kind a finest jewel I wish I could hold and make all your sweet dreams come so true.
It seem like every time I see you my heart loses so much control,
Cause when you sometimes look in my eyes I can feel you searching my lonely soul.
My beautiful Mayan queen, its like that oldie song called " I wanna get next to you because I know that you can help me stop my heart from singing these lonely blues."
Baby, I can take you on a sweet sexual fantasy to the highest peak,
But one touch of my lips on your beautiful body will make you so weak.
After we are done making love our bodies will be full of so much sweat,
And I promise you my Mayan queen this will be something you'll never want to regret.
Are you my Mayan Queen?

(Repeat Chorus 2x's)

Verse 4
I truly believe that you're special in every way,
Cause you're the mother of the night and the queen of the sparkling stars that I can't simply let you slip away.
You look so soft and sweet like candy
So please grant me a delicious taste, I can tell just by caressing your body and lip that I can see that my touch brings a sexy smile to your lovely face.
I think you're the cure to this loneliness in my heart that I feel inside cause my Mayan Queen, I don't think that it will be hard for me to convince you to be mine.
I don't think that I'll never find another queen that's lovely like you,
Because there's only one true Mayan queen like you that makes my heart sing these lovely blues.
Don't cry my beautiful Mayan Queen!

(Repeat Chorus 4x's)

Dear Beat Within

I first saw a copy of "Beat Within" when a brother showed me his article. After I read that article I asked could I read the rest of the magazine. What I read it made me think about things I need to and can change about myself. I really enjoyed the thoughts provoking positive and spiritual insight and awareness that the article had. I would like to be placed on the mailing list. I noticed that I was not the only one in the world with those issues. But now that I see I have some help, I will use it to the best of my ability. Thank you for giving me that extra push.

PEDRO This first time writer instantly recognized how special The Beat Within is and decided to write to us. We're happy he did because as you'll see, his piece entitled, "Today's Society," is a magnificent one. He lists some ills that are going on with our society and then gives concrete reasons why we should be thinking of some solutions. We can't leave it up to the people who are in control of policies now because it's obvious that they don't know what they're doing. He also sends us a letter where he's thanking us for giving him that extra push, but in all actuality, he's the one that gave us that extra push. So for that, we're thankful. He's writing from the Jackson Correctional Institution in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. The best way to stay on our mailing list is to continue writing us pieces and reminding us to keep you there.

Today's Society

In today's society, juvenile crime has become the rock that has shattered the face of our society and nearly destroyed the fiber of our nation. The public media has in the past compared our young people to the rhesus monkey, which only wants to have sex, reproduce and finally kill each other. In reality, the media continues to portray many of our communities as a jungle that is moving backward in evolution. I myself as a youth had fallen prey to gangs, drugs, power and wealth. I joined a gang known as the "I.O.A". In this gang I found love and mental support. I grew up in a dysfunctional family. Mom struggled to maintain the household and raise two kids. Dad was an addict as well as a street hustler/player.

As an adult, I have come to experience the very same vicious cycle of street hustling, jails and prisons. Now, having served a number of years in prison and other correctional institutions, I have met a large number of young people who have been sentenced to life behind bars. Over 70% of our juvenile offenders who make their way through the criminal justice system will end up spending the rest of their youth in an adult facility. He/she will become mentally disturbed, and if they are lucky enough to leave alive, they will be mentally and emotionally weakened. Brothers and sisters, we as Latino people can no longer allow our young people to fall victim to the materialistic trappings in our society. We need to help our young people develop better definitions of themselves so they will turn away from gang life and drugs. In short, we need to help them identify their strengths and purposes. Brothers and sisters, if we continue to leave this in the hands of those who profess to be the solvers of juvenile crime, the rise in crime and human waste will continue unabated, as it has for these many years.

Today I stand here and testify that I have survived by

the grace of god, knowing that many of my brothers and sisters have not been so fortunate. Collectively we have been involved in the dealing and using of drugs, gang violence and many other anti-social activities. Many of us who started out this way are now in jail and in prison, while others are dead, and few others moved on with their lives. I, by the grace of god and his unselfish mercy, am here, able to share with you my testimony. While serving time again, Allah has spoken to me. He told me that my life experiences would serve as testimony to young people so that they don't end up living, using and selling drugs, gang-banging, hurting innocent people and breaking the laws and rules of society.

We as a whole should want to help our youth, so they can be spared the misery and loneliness of life behind bars and gates, in a closed society. That day, the man told me to "just keep it real." I truly believe that with experience and love we can save our youth from the starless midnight of violence.

Every other day another life is washed away by the violence and darkness that has fallen upon our Latino community.

The thought of tomorrow brings fear to this lonely heart of mine. For tomorrow in my mind is another violent day, which shall leave behind another lifeless body, spilled upon the ghetto floor.

My brothers and sisters, look around and see the dark clouds which from the walls around our cities, holding in bondage. The young and the old who shall die without ever having the opportunity to live out their dreams. I, as a Latino man, can sense the underlying sadness and the hopeless dreams of our future. As I close this letter to you, my brothers and sisters, I envision the winds of peace as they gently blow, bringing with them a brighter tomorrow for a generation. Yet unborn...

SENARBLE Writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, we give you this first time writer who asks a really good question, "Who Are You?" Our society has the tendency to act as though they have our best interest at heart when really they use that as justification to ruin our lives. For instance, "We're invading Iraq and killing thousands of people, making enemies because they are threatening us." Or, "Let's lock everyone up because for some, jail is the only way to straighten them out." We all know those are lies, yet we don't do anything to fight back. In a while, we'll all be attacked in the name of defense. We can see it now, "Everyone has to die because that's the only way we'll be safe." Who are you? That's a great question to ask a country that was founded on acting as though we're the best friend when really we're the enemy. You can tell this next writer is a great one, he has us all over the map without introducing him. The hell with it, without further ado...

Who Are You?

You contradict yourself put us to death, take countries wealth.

"Who are you?"

You make laws then you break them, to cover it up you remake them.

"Who are you?"

You send us to war for reasons only you know why. How many more has to die before you decide enough is enough.

"Who are you?"

You are quick to mention the name "God" when you're trying to exercise your views and thoughts towards the people.

But hey, I'm not the one to judge nor do I hold a grudge. But do you really think "God" appreciates what you have did, done, and are doing?

"Who are you?"

When will all of this come to a halt? "OH"... I forgot none of this is your fault.

But could I ask you a question?

"Who are you?"

The thought of tomorrow brings fear to this lonely heart of mine. For tomorrow in my mind is another violent day, which shall leave behind another lifeless body, spilled upon the ghetto floor.

JEREMY TOWNER

Our beloved Jeremy Towner is finally back on the scene again, but not with a book as amazing as, "Con-flicted." However he does hit us with many 'thoughts' and 'epiphanies.' He's a very spiritual man that we highly respect. He often talks about God and the good He's played in his life. We learn a lot from Jeremy every time he writes, so we're always excited when the envelope has his return address on it: Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. This week we did have a slight concern for him and wanted to express it. In his second piece, "God's Truth Is Round," he makes the bold statement that, "So if anyone tries to tell you Christianity is bull and corrupt your witnessing one who cannot face the truth." We feel like it would have been better to substitute Christianity with spirituality because there are many ways to reach the same goal of true enlightenment. Christianity is but one of those ways, however there are others. We just wanted to make that clear... Thank you for such wise words as always, Jeremy, and again, as always, we can't wait to hear more.

Days Thought

I am a prisoner. Do I have hope of being free? A little I guess but its' so miniscule that I leave it in the hands of God to decide. I'm not worried that I am not free to roam the world but I am sad I will not be given a second chance.

My family is barely in my life and that's okay. I'm pretty much just waiting for God now. Waiting for my true father and lord to come and take me home. It's a long wait it is. While I wait I say to the rosary once every day. Why? Because I want to feel closer to what accepts me for me and not for what I'm not. Too many expectations in this life. Especially if you don't know how to act. So I leave it to the worldly to fight for their possessions. My possessions are in my heart and no man can take them. For in these possessions lies a power far greater than any weapon created by man. These at least I can take with me to heaven to give to God and for now that is all that matters to me.

I could do without the whole prison thing though. But it took prison to show me what I truly am. A man who does stupid things to go to prison. I cannot give blame to Satan. For I know Satan and his ways. It is my fault that I listened when I knew better. That original sin just won't go away.

Sea Of Life

Sometimes it is hard to breath in this way of life. Suffocating in misery and fatigue. Gasping in this struggle to find the world again. It feels as if I'm sinking into the ice cold depths of desperation. With the surface of life falling away further and further. Darkness becomes deeper and deeper and surrounds my thoughts. The further I sink the more hopeless it all seems to try to struggle back to reality. More and more I feel like giving in to the temptations of power in the darkness around me. But I always keep in mind that as time goes by the season changes and all things pass away, given we have patience enough to watch. Bodies grow older, minds become mature. I ask myself then, "Why then do our bodies die but our wisdom never fades? Always absorbing knowledge to the point of being foolish but never fading?"

So I see I'm falling, drowning in my own lack of wisdom but by seeing this I obtain wisdom. It will never pass as I grow old. No, I just sit and watch as my body ages. My mind trapped within sights with hope that one day when it is done that I can be free. Free to see my dreams. Free to see the seas that wash upon the sands of foreign lands. Free to really breathe the breath of an eternal life.

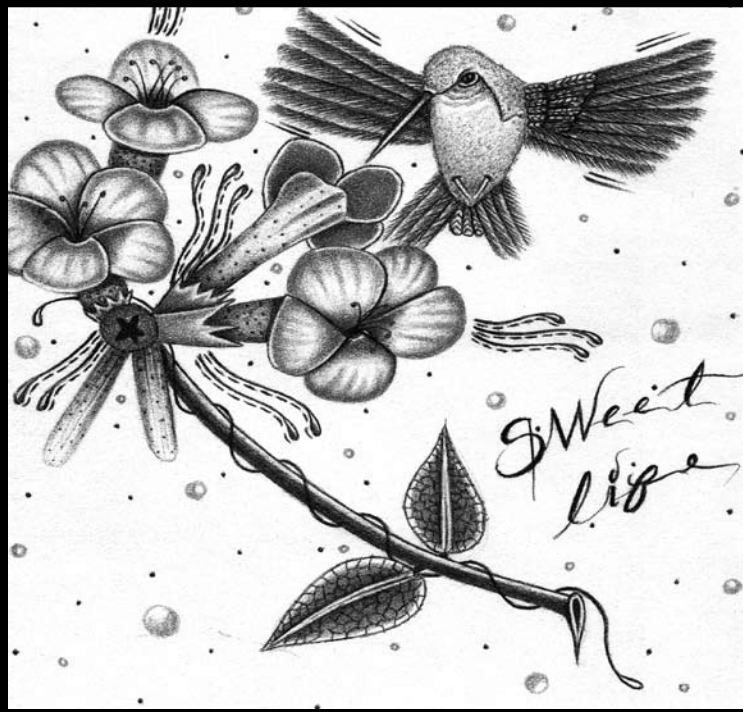
But for now I struggle and fight for life beyond my reach. Floating above my sorrow and loss and lack of wisdom. Going through the ups and downs of the storms that god throws at me. Knowing that no one is alone in this sea.

God's Truth Is Round

It is unfortunate when we are born into the dark side of life. Coming into the World a child learns from those around him. So where do they learn to lie, steal, hate, fight, even kill. You think we make this up? Truth is its been advertised as possibilities in the makeup of the human will. We learned it because people teach it, show it, emphasize it on T.V, live it everyday.

So when we do what we know we're smited by those around us. This doesn't bring enlightenment but confusion. Maybe it's them who are wrong. Bt that's a stupid thing to say for we know they're not. We just don't want to face that what we have known to be a part of life since we began to understand the things we learn that all of it was just a delusion. It's like finding out the world is round and not flat. Everyone knows the world's flat why should I believe differently? Then comes truth and its proof and we stand fast in denial trying to think of a way to dispute this truth. We never find a way but make excuses for our lack of accepting what is so plainly true. We always assume that what we know is infallible. Guess what, the earth is round. So is the world of God.

So if anyone tries to tell you Christianity is bull and corrupt your witnessing one who cannot face the truth. The truth that we all on this earth live our lives in the concept that the world is flat.

**The Days Epiphany**

I thought to myself this day an answer to question that I have asked myself. The question was, "Why can't one man stay in the light of all things." The answer came in my thoughts from the distant depths of connecting this puzzle of inquiries. "For one to appreciate the light in all that it does one has to understand the darkness around him." What better place than in this prison to observe the darkness of the hearts of men?

Though I became ashamed for I see potential darkness waiting in my own heart. Halted only by the thin power of will to not become one with the vileness that exists in us all. No one is spared the shared responsibility of keeping at bay the inequities we subconsciously desire. That's something to fear itself. No man walks in the light of all things. How could we appreciate it if we did?

Thought: The cursed wages of a Thief are never Enough.

Epiphany of the Day

Psalms 82:6-7 "I have said, Ye are Gods; and all of you are the children of the most High.

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." John 10:34 Jesus says, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods?"

We of the human race have the ability to raise the world on the precipice of power to achieve phenomenal glory and righteous perspective that can lead us into unfathomable reaches to exploring the further reaches beyond our imagination. It is a shame we waste such power with warring with each other so that we may have dominance amongst ourselves. We may be Gods under God but we still have yet to understand our powers and how strong they really are. We underestimate our abilities and are satisfied with only what we choose to comprehend. Such a waste.

This Days Epiphany

Can man fear life more than his own death so much that he willingly will embrace his inevitable fate sooner than the natural law will meet out?

Such occasions of suicide are numerous even in thought. At least once has everyone in human existence hated their own life and has either ended it, tired to, or are thinking about it.

What a trap of thought we put ourselves into. We feel the pressure of losing what we consider "important" and decide to, or think about, kill ourselves. I guess we put our faith of importance into the wrong things. Thank God for God that I would have ended it a long time ago.

Thought: Usually a persons love is in things that come and go. Often not in something eternal.

The entrance to hell is a beautiful lure to attract the greed from the souls of men. If the body follows then God help the man be rid of his greed.

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

The Days Thought

The Eucharist is the sacrament of Sacrifice, Thanksgiving and praise. But today I ask, "What sacrifice can I give to the Lord God?" My life is forfeit to the laws of man. I take no pleasure in anything but the feeling of belonging. Even there I have been betrayed. So what is left?

Perhaps it is my life. I only have the remnant of my soul and I'm reluctant to let that go. But if I'm to be a true disciple stripped of all avenues then I'm tested to accept the fate of this sacrifice. The greatest gift I can give another. My life for his.

After Thought: We, as Christians, look to live in the fulfillment of the law of Christ. I often thought though that fulfillment is never ending. Are we not ourselves sponges of understanding? Soaking up knowledge while cleaning up our act? Are we ever fulfilled into satisfaction without abyss of ignorance to be filled with all things righteous? Can't the law then be more fulfilled without bordering heresy?

Also how far does the Pinnacle of truth reach in the ways of righteousness? The Absolute purity of human consciousness abounds, it seems, into infinite expression. What a sobering yet foolish realization. Our potential as a free will exists at a level when we become satisfied that the path to God has been found. Some see the horizon as impossible for the reaches of our minds and are content with just staring at the light at the end of the path. Yet God clearly expresses that there is no limit with him as long as we stay within the parameters of his guidance.

This is very exciting indeed to see this realization for it reminds me that God is definitely not done with us yet for there is still eternity beyond the horizon. So the pinnacle of truth is layered with revelations that lead us to higher powers of our minds that have laid dormant since the original sin. Finally we shall see what powers lie within.

AARON JONES We're going to put this poem in graphic and also because this is this next writer's first time writing for us, however, it is something we know all too well. You want us to tell you what it is... Well, it's someone who has hormones racing through them isolated from everything beautiful in the world letting some steam off by fantasizing about a girl we're sure he knows better than us. The positive thing about this is he has a great imagination, but ONE of the negative things about this is this publication's mainly for youngsters who are locked up and we're trying to teach them something other than primal desires. We'd appreciate it if next time you sent us something you could keep our audience in mind. Oh, and by the way, we don't know of any other organization doing exactly what we do — publish a weekly collection of writing from inside juvenile halls in the bay area and beyond, so we don't know who you would like us to send the next poem you write like this to. He's writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA. Hopefully, he gets the idea that we're not trying to put together a compilation of "Jackie Collins" type, horny prisoner writing. But instead, we're offering a platform to teach something other than the practice of reproducing. We want genuine TLC and not shallow physical ecstasies.

A Little TLC

When I think about the moment we are alone together, I shiver. I shiver in passion. To capture the feeling of your fingers running slowly down my chin, chest, and my stomach...

I want to take your finger in my mouth and suck it, while I run my teeth along it as I pull away. I want to kiss your chest and trace you with the tip of my touch, just around your navel, but not too hard. Most definitely, I can almost feel you right here, right now! I hunger for you, for you, to feel you, but most of all to taste you.

You've never known my touch (you know) but you will my love! I want not to only touch you with my hands and fingers, but to also caress and stroke you with my lips, tongue, and teeth.

I will be gentle with you. I want to tease you until you go mad and attack me like a vicious lion who's been anxiously waiting for the perfect moment to strike!

I want you to devour me like you always do with you eyes but the smile that will grace your face when you are endowed with the knowledge I taste just as good as I look.

As I kiss your lips, I dream about this moment so after I can picture it right now. This dream is so intoxicating that I find after waking up from it, I want to close my eyes and recapture it again never to wake up, and then, the moment we connect, I feel I cannot breathe because your body is so hot, I can barely touch you.

The chemicals of our sweat combine and the smell drives the both of us insane with loving thoughts. But as I run my fingers down your chest, I don't want to stop until we are both drenched. As I bring you close to kiss you, I can feel your flesh against mine.

As I turn to expose my neck to you, begging you to connect with your mouth and bite down. I want to run my hands down your back as I feel your lips on my neck. But when I think about us together this way, I become delirious with passionate thoughts, and I look forward to tasting you all over.

The time will be sooner than can imagine my love.
I love you

Living in the Fast Lane popping pills shooting heroin, and
cocaine. Indulging in wild sex for hours on the ecstasy,
Selling all kinds of drugs
Living the life of a street thug.
Selling yourself as well as others
Not giving a damn about skin color!
You've grown accustomed to living on the edge
And won't stop until you're dead!

read the rest of Cecil West's BWO piece on page 38

